

AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS.

A REVIEW OF A CENTURY'S
WORK IN BETHEL CHURCH
AND SUNDAY SCHOOL,
BURSLEM.

*With a Short Sketch of the other Churches in the
Burslem Circuit, Methodist New Connexion.*

WITH 53 ILLUSTRATIONS.

By JOHN YOUNG.



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I am Yours in the Master's Service,

John Young

PREFACE.

A FEW days prior to the last Sunday School Anniversary, May 3rd, 1903, it was discovered that the School was established in 1802, and that, therefore, a century had been completed the previous year. It was cause for regret that an event of such importance should have been overlooked, but as that was the *100th Anniversary* it was proposed to make some reference to the century's work on that occasion. I hurriedly gathered a few scraps of information, and made them the subject of my remarks at the evening service. The friends were interested, and a desire was expressed that a short history should be compiled and put into a permanent form. I cheerfully undertook the work, and throughout it has been a labour of love, and therefore a labour of joy.

I have experienced considerable difficulty in securing reliable data ; old minute books have not been preserved, and there are periods of many years of which no information could be secured. I have made the best of the materials I had, but am conscious of many defects.

Some friends may be disappointed in not seeing their own names, or those of their friends, in the book. I can only say, I have endeavoured to keep, as strictly as possible in this matter, to those who have served the church in *office*, and only the names which were found in official books and documents have been mentioned. It would have

been dangerous to have taken a wider range, for the number of worthy, loyal souls, who never held office, is great, and it would have been difficult to make a selection, without, at least, apparent invidiousness.

While I was writing the history of Bethel, the thought occurred to me that a brief sketch of the other churches in the Circuit might be interesting. The suggestion was heartily accepted, and information willingly supplied.

I would specially acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. A. H. Boulton, who has rendered most valuable assistance ; to Mr. G. E. S. Brooks, for the use of Deeds, which enabled me to deal with the earlier history of Bethel ; also to Mrs. Capey, Mr. W. Capey, Mr. Charles Shaw, Mr. G. H. Hassall, Alderman T. P. Heath, J.P., Mrs. Guy, and my colleague, Rev. F. Rhodes, who have been most responsive to every request : and many others of whom inquiries have been made.

We offer this souvenir of loving and faithful work to all our churches, in the hope that it may prove an encouragement and a stimulus to further sacrifice and service for Christ and the Church.

BURSLEM, STAFFS
1903.

John Young.
J.Y.



AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

The Introduction of Methodism into Burslem.

AT the Midsummer Quarter Sessions, in the year 1759, a licence was granted for the holding of religious services in the house of Mr. William Lockett, near the Parish Church, and there the first Methodist "Society" in the Potteries was formed. But two years before that date, John Wesley's travelling preachers had visited Burslem, preaching from a horse-block in front of the Leopard Inn, and afterward in an old house, which stood on the site of the present Market House, until they established themselves in their duly licensed premises.¹

The population of Burslem, at that time, was small—numbering barely a thousand persons ; but including the out-parts of Cobridge, Hot Lane, Sneyd Green, The Hamel, Brownhills, and Longbridge, there might have been a total of rather more than two thousand. The houses were mean and poor—mostly covered with thatch, and scattered irregularly here and there.²

The morals of the people did not rise higher than their social conditions. They were little better than clothed

1.—Ward's History of Stoke-on-Trent, p. 246.

2.—Ibid, p. 234.

savages, living in vulgar disregard of God, and blindly following the brutal passions of their debased and uncultured nature. Yet, small provision was made for their religious needs, and the same lack prevailed throughout the district. "The Parish Church of Stoke, the Parochial Chapel at Burslem, a small chapel of private foundation at Hanley, and another at Lane End, were the only places of worship belonging to the establishment," and there were few, if any, belonging to other denominations. "And the clergy were not like the vigilant and pious men we have the happiness to number among us in modern times. The clergy of

the old school, indeed, too generally left their parishioners to find their own way to heaven, unless they would voluntarily put themselves in the way of their weekly ministrations, and learn from the church the pure and unadulterated Word."¹ But that is all too generous an estimate of the clerical character. Many of the clergy knew little of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and did not greatly adorn the doctrines of God their Saviour. They joined in the vulgar and cruel sports of the people, often staggered home drunk, and not unfrequently performed the sacred functions of their office in such a besotted condition as to be scarcely able to stand erect, or articulate the words of the service. "Uncanny" superstition also held them as tightly in its grip as it held the common people, as witness the laying of "Molly Leigh's" ghost in the parish churchyard at midnight, by the not too sober parson Spencer, when a living black-bird was placed in the unearthed coffin to accomplish the gruesome task.

John Wesley paid his first visit to Burslem on Saturday March 8th 1760, and the following reference to it appears in his journal: "We went to Burslem, near Newcastle-under-Lyme, a scattered town, on the top of a hill, inhabited almost entirely by potters; a multitude of whom assembled

1. Ward's History of Stoke-on-Trent, p. 361.

at five in the evening. Deep attention sat on every face, though as yet accompanied with deep ignorance. But if the heart be toward God, He will, in due time, enlighten the understanding. Sunday 9th, I preached at eight to near double the number, though scarce half as many as came at five in the evening. Some of these seemed quite innocent of thought. Five or six were laughing and talking till I had near done, and one of them threw a clod of earth, which struck me, on the side of the head. But it neither disturbed me nor the congregation."¹

Methodism was well suited to the ardent and impulsive temperament of those people, and the little "society" grew apace. Mr. Wesley's visits became frequent, and strong attachments were formed; he speaks of the people as—"My old steady friends at Burslem." At this time a new impetus seems to have been given to the trade of the district, and signs of improvement were evident on every hand, while the morals and habits of the potters were considerably improved. Writing again on the twentieth anniversary of his first visit, March 8th 1781 Mr. Wesley says: "I returned to Burslem. How is the whole face of the country changed in about twenty years! since which, inhabitants have continually flowed in from every side. Hence the wilderness is literally become a fruitful field. Houses, villages, towns have sprang up; and the country is not more improved than the people. The word of God has had free course among them, sinners are daily awakened and converted to God, and believers grow in the knowledge of Christ. In the evening the house was filled with people, and with the presence of God. This constrained me to continue the service a good deal longer than I am accustomed to do."²

About six years later a glorious revival broke out, the work of the Holy Spirit was marvellous, and the people were

1.—Wesley's Journal, Vol. 2., p. 503.

2.—Quoted in Ward's History of Stoke-on-Trent, p. 33.

converted in large numbers. We give the description of it in Mr. Wesley's own words, and without apology for the length of the quotation: "About twelve I preached at Lane End (Longton). It being too cold to stand abroad, the greater part of the earnest congregation squeezed into the preaching house. Here we entered into a country which seems to be all on fire—that which borders on Burslem on every side, preachers and people provoking one another to love and good works in such a manner as I had never seen before. In the evening I preached at Burslem. Observing the people flocking together, I began half an hour before the appointed time. But notwithstanding this, the house would not contain one half of the congregation; so while I was preaching in the house to all that could get in, John Broadbent preached in a yard to the rest. The Lovefeast followed; but such a one as I have not known for many years. While the two or three first spoke, the power of God so fell upon all that were present, some praying and others giving thanks, that their voices could scarce be heard, and two or three were speaking at a time, till I gently advised them to speak one at a time; and they did so, with amazing energy. Some of them had found peace a year ago, some within a month or a week, some within a day or two, and one of them, a potter's boy, told us—'At the prayer-meeting I found myself dropping into hell, and I cried to the Lord, and He showed me He loved me. But Satan came immediately and offered me a bag of money as long as my arm, but I said, get thee behind me, Satan.' Several also testified that the blood of Christ had cleared them from all sin. Two declared, after bitter cries, that they knew their sins were just then blotted out by the blood of the Lamb; and I doubt not that it will be found, upon inquiry, that several more were either justified or sanctified. Indeed, there has been for some time such an out-pouring of the Spirit here, as has not been in any other part of the kingdom, particularly in

the meetings for prayer. Fifteen or twenty have been justified in a day. Some of them have been the most notorious, abandoned sinners in all the country, and the people flock into the society on every side—six, eight, or ten in an evening.”¹

This gracious work continued with little abatement for more than a year. On his next visit, thirteen months from the last, Mr. Wesley found “the work of God still prospering exceedingly. Sinners—men, women and children, are still convinced and converted to God every day; and there are exceeding few that draw back, as they are much united in affection, and watch over each in love.”²



1.—Wesley's Journal, Vol. 4, p. 350.

2.—Ibid, Vol. 4, p. 394.

CHAPTER II.

The Origin of the Methodist New Connexion.

THE happy state of things described in the foregoing chapter, was, unfortunately, destined not to continue always. Mr. Wesley died, March 2nd, 1791, and then began days of trouble. The smouldering fire of discontent, which he was able by his great personality, and kindly but indomitable will, to keep under, soon broke out into a fierce flame of rebellion against an autocratic government in the church. They were dark days of bitterness and strife, recrimination and expulsion, and we would gladly pass them over in the better spirit which has now come over the churches, and the more cordial relations which prevail between the different communions of Methodism. But justice to the work we have in hand demands some reference to those unhappy disputes.

Mr. Wesley's power was absolute, though exercised with affection and in the general interests of the community. This was admissible in the infancy of the Connexion; but when churches became established with able ministers, and intelligent, Godfearing laymen, who were capable, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to manage ecclesiastical affairs, it began to be felt that a change of policy, which should give the people some voice in the government of the church, was urgently needed. Mr. Wesley had made no provision for that; indeed, he had transferred his own

absolute power, by a legal enactment, to his preachers, who did not hesitate to exercise it to the full. This was resented, and, shortly after Wesley's death, the move for reform began to take definite shape. Meetings were held, letters written, petitions signed, and as many as fifty pamphlets were scattered broadcast in the Connexion. The Reforms



REV. ALEXANDER KILHAM.

which the people claimed included—"The right to hold religious services during church hours; to receive the Sacraments at the hands of their own ministers; the admission of delegates into the District Meeting and Conference, and a voice in the reception and expulsion of members, and the appointment of officers.

Alexander Kilham, who was then a minister of seven years' standing, and stationed at Newcastle-on-Tyne, entered into the controversy by publishing a pamphlet in reply to a virulent attack made by a Mr. Grey, on his superintendent, Rev. Joseph Cownley, for having administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to some members, who desired him to do so. The pamphlet was entitled—"An address to the members and friends of the Newcastle Society," and was intended only for local circulation. But so clearly was the case for reform presented, and so cogent were the arguments for the rights of the people, that it soon became widely known, and copies of it were sent for from all parts of the Connexion. For the issuing of that pamphlet Mr. Kilham was arraigned before the Conference of 1792, tried and censured. But he was not alone in his discontent; letters and petitions in great numbers were poured into the Conference, only however, to be destroyed without being read. Still the controversy continued, and the agitation, marked by increasing acrimony, spread far and near. Several ministers placed themselves on the side of Kilham, addressed meetings of the people, and wrote letters and pamphlets.

Each succeeding Conference became more and more the scene of heated debate, personal recrimination, and bitter strife, with no adjustment of differences. After the Conference of 1795, Mr. Kilham wrote his final pamphlet, entitled: "The Progress of Liberty," in the second part of which, he submitted to "The people called Methodists," the outline of a Constitution which included the following proposals, viz:—

1st "That instead of the preachers having the sole power to admit and expel members, these acts should be done with the consent of the people."

2nd "That the members should have a voice in choosing their own leaders."

3rd "That local preachers instead of being appointed by the Circuit Preacher, should be examined and approved by the Leaders and Quarterly Meetings; with which Meeting also should rest the power of receiving and dismissing them."

4th "That as it was impossible to allow the people to choose their own ministers, on account of the itinerant plan, yet the Quarterly Meetings should have a voice in recommending preachers to travel."

5th "That lay-delegates, appointed by the Quarterly Meeting, should attend the District Meetings."

6th "That, with submission to the preachers and the Connexion at large, one or two lay-delegates be appointed from every District Meeting to attend the Conference."¹

For the issuing of that pamphlet Mr. Kilham was expelled by the following Conference, 1796, the resolution of expulsion being carried by the Members of Conference standing up, and afterwards signing a paper attesting the justice of the act.

As might have been expected, the action of the Conference, so far from allaying the excitement and agitation, greatly increased their intensity, and caused them to spread more widely than ever. In many large centres, as Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield, meetings were held with a view of forming a new body of liberal Methodism. Towards the close of the year the friends in Leeds purchased Ebenezer Chapel from the Baptists, the opening services being conducted by Mr. Kilham, May 7th, 1797. Then the Methodist New Connexion was formed. In that chapel—"Old Ebenezer," as it is familiarly called, on August 9th, 1797, the first Conference was held, Rev. William Thom being elected President and Rev. Alexander Kilham, Secretary. Two others of Mr. Wesley's preachers also joined them, viz: Revs. S. Eversfield and A. Cummings,

1.—M.N.C. Jubilee, Vol., p. 89-90.



OLD EBENEZER CHAPEL, LEEDS, where the Methodist New Connexion was formed.

and five thousand members of the Wesleyan community seceded and cast in their lot with the "New Itinerancy" as it was then called. At that first Conference the principles were formulated and debated, and afterwards accepted, upon which the Methodist New Connexion was founded. They were as follows, viz :—

1st—"The right of the people to hold their public religious worship at such hours as were most convenient, without their being restricted to the mere interval of the hours appointed for service in the Established Church.

2nd—"The right of the people to receive the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper from the hands of their own ministers, and in their own places of worship."

3rd—"The right of the people to a representation in the District Meetings, and in the Annual Conferences, and thereby to participate in the government of the community,

and in the appropriation of its funds."

4th—"The right of the Church to have a voice, through its local business meetings, in the reception and expulsion of members, the choice of local officers, and the calling out of candidates for the ministry."¹

For those Principles we have stood as a Christian community for 106 years, and have seen them grow in favour and acceptance as the churches have advanced in intelligence and spiritual culture, until now they are adopted, in the main or in part, in every church in Christendom. Surely such success has more than justified the manly and courageous stand taken by our fathers, and amply repaid the sacrifice they made, and the obloquy and persecution they suffered for conscience and the people.

Alexander Kilham was born at Epworth, which was also the birth place of the Wesleys, July 10th, 1762. His parents were Godfearing people, and created for him a home atmosphere of piety and prayer. His religious impressions commenced at the age of five years, and all through his boyhood and youth he oscillated between the right way and the wrong, now yielding to, and now resisting the Spirit of God; until at the age of twenty he definitely and publicly sought the Lord, and declared himself a Christian. Then at once he began to tell of the love that had redeemed him, and exhorted others to accept the grace which bringeth salvation. He entered the ministry in 1785, and proved himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. He was a man of great power and holy fervour. He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. His life was strenuous and over crowded, and his "sun went down while it was yet day." The terrible strain of the agitation proved too much for his strength, and in the second year of the Connexion's history, he passed away to the reward of the "good and faithful servant."

1.—Jubilee Vol., p. 56-7.

In the Minutes of Conference, 1799, we find the following question and answer:—

Ques. : “Who have died this year?”

Ans. : “Alex. Kilham, a minister whose praise is in all our churches. In gratitude to his memory, a handsome marble monument, with an inscription, has been erected, by the Connexion, in the chapel at Nottingham, where his remains are deposited.”

We give the inscription in full, as it clearly interprets the life and spirit of the man.

“To the Memory of
ALEXANDER KILHAM,
Minister of the Chapel.

A faithful servant in the vineyard of Christ,
A zealous defender of the rights of the people
against attempts to force on them
a Priestly Domination.

Deserted of many of his friends,
he lived to see the cause flourish
in which he died a martyr.

In promoting the glory of God
and the happiness of his brethren,
he counted nothing too dear a sacrifice

In this pursuit
ease and indulgence were despised by him

His last hours
were peaceful and triumphant,
unembittered by a moment's repentance
for having opposed corruption in the church
he blessed God
that He had made him instrumental in doing
and only regretted
that he had not done it more faithfully.

Committing his soul to his Redeemer
he took his flight to a better world.
December 20th, 1798,

Aged 36.”

CHAPTER III.

The Commencement of the Methodist New Connexion in Burslem.

ALL the Wesleyan Societies in the Potteries were included in the Macclesfield Circuit, until about the year 1781, when Burslem, comprising Hanley and other Pottery towns, was detached and became a separate Circuit. The Society at Hanley contained strong men, men of convictions and courage as the brothers Job and George Ridgway, Job Meigh, William Smith, John Mort. These men joined in the general agitation for reform, and the Society wishing to have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered by their own travelling preachers, twice petitioned Conference for permission, but each time the petition was refused. Relations in the Circuit became very strained, and temper on both sides was neither sweet nor amiable. The majority of the Hanley trustees lived at Burslem, "the head of the circuit," and the "Mother town of Staffordshire Potteries;" and with such social distinctions, it was considered meet and right to assert themselves, and end all controversy as to superiority and power. So they undertook to fix the hours of preaching services for Hanley, which were seven o'clock on the Saturday evening, and seven and nine o'clock on Sunday morning. The times were not convenient for the worshippers, and they were determined to have more suitable hours. But this was only one element in the condition of

things which had become intolerable, and which the people were determined should be altered. A meeting therefore, of Preachers, Leaders, Trustees and Stewards, was called at Hanley, to consider the grievances. There matters were freely and vigorously discussed, and it was ultimately decided by the majority of those present and voting, that a petition embodying their complaints should be forwarded to the approaching Conference. Immediately the vote was taken, the Superintendent preacher arose, and said to the Trustees from Burslem, "Now exert your powers," and forthwith one of them rushed to the door and locked it. "Now," said the preacher "deliver up your plans and class papers, for not one of you who have voted for that petition, is any longer a member of our Societies." The scene that followed is not described, but can be imagined. At last all were commanded to leave the Chapel, and the keys were taken to Burslem. But this did not end matters. The next week, Messrs. W. Smith, John Mort and Job Ridgway attended the Quarterly meeting, in the hope of being permitted to explain their position to the circuit; they were however, peremptorily informed that they no longer belonged to them, and were ordered instantly to quit the premises. After that they tried to state their case to the District meeting, but not a word were they permitted to utter. Then they forwarded their petition to Conference by the hand of William Smith; this too, was sternly rejected, with the declaration that "the conference would sooner go to shivers than admit of any alterations." Handbills also were distributed, announcing that all who had signed petitions, and there were many petitions from all parts of the Connexion, no longer belonged to the body. Moreover it was proclaimed from the Conference pulpit that "the petitioners had neither sense nor grace; were enemies to the King and Country, indeed, were the very dregs and scum, which God would sweep away with the besom of destruction." (See

autobiography of Job Ridgway, in four articles, *Methodist New Connexion Magazine*, 1814.) Alas for such a record; but we must not judge harshly. The whole business might have been conducted in a better spirit, but those good men acted according to their lights, and thought they were doing God's will.

The expelled members at Hanley at once proceeded to form a new society in the house of Mr. Job Meigh, and within six weeks after our first Conference eight societies had been formed in the Potteries and district, and among them was one at Burslem, which was commenced in the house of Mr. William Rowley, in Hot Lane. Mr. Rowley was the great-grandfather, on the maternal side, of our present respected Alfred Henry Boulton.

The name of Mr. Job Ridgway was closely identified with the origin of the Methodist New Connexion in Burslem. Indeed it is to his exertions and generosity that, under the blessing of God, we owe our existence in this town. A brief sketch of his life therefore, will not be out of place here. For the particulars we set down, we are indebted to his own autobiography previously referred to.

He was born at Great Chell, in the county of Stafford, in the year 1759, and was one of a family of ten children. His father inherited a good estate, and coming of age, built a pot manufactory; but the enterprise was followed by misfortune, and he was compelled afterwards to earn a livelihood by working as a journeyman potter. In the tenth year of his age, Job heard a Methodist preacher discourse on the duty of prayer, and was deeply impressed. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a branch of the pottery trade, and still attended Methodist services; but it was not until he had attained his twenty second year that he gave up all for Christ, and cried:

“O let me feel Thy blood applied,
And live and die forgiven.”

The answer came at once— "Fear not, thou art mine. Behold I am thy salvation."

He was then living in Leeds, but shortly after returned to Hanley. His former ungodly companions called to see him, when he informed them that he was a Methodist, and they expressed themselves sorry for him. At that time there was preaching service only once a fortnight in Hanley, and a class, which the leader met irregularly. This class he joined, and threw himself earnestly into Christian work, securing a larger room in which to worship, and a weekly service, and was ultimately appointed the leader of a class. He also became a local preacher and laboured with much diligence and acceptance. In his early married life he commenced business in the manufacture of lawn for the use of potters; but "finding that bribery and drunkenness were the only passport to custom," he gave up the business as soon as possible. He then took a situation as the manager of some pottery works for five years, after which he commenced again for himself as an earthenware manufacturer taking his brother George into partnership, and three years later, Mr. William Smith. After the death of Mr. Smith, his executors were paid his share in full, and the business was carried on by the two brothers, until the sons of each, having grown into manhood, it was thought advisable, in their interest, to dissolve partnership. This was done in the most amicable and brotherly spirit, and Mr. Job built the works, and established the now world renowned business at Cauldon Place.

He was a man of excellent business parts and prospered in his undertaking, but not at the expense of his religion. He remembered God in all his ways, and put the honour of his conscience first in everything, and the fervency of his zeal for religion continued all through his life. He built our first chapel as we shall presently see, after which he built a house for himself, and writes, "I now reflected with much pleasure, that I had built a house for the Lord, before I had laid a

brick for my own." Later on he writes again "With humility, I can say, that by the grace of God, from the time I began business till the the present, I never suffered it to interfere with my duties in the church, or in my family, being convinced that, diligence in business must be joined with fervency of spirit, in order to secure the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

He ended his eventful life, May 14th, 1813. He was smitten with a fatal illness while attending the sessions of Conference in Bethesda Chapel, Hanley, and in ten hours after, "peacefully resigned his Spirit to God who gave it."



CHAPTER IV

Zoar.

THE dwelling house in Hot Lane, soon became too small for the growing society which had been formed there, and the people who gathered to hear the gospel message from preachers whose hearts were on fire with love to God and their fellow men. Larger premises became a necessity; so Mr. Job Ridgway, in his passionate enthusiasm for the new condition of things, proceeded to look for a site on which to erect a permanent home for the young and vigorous "cause." In this he succeeded, and on July 19th, 1798, he purchased from "Thomas Sherwin, of Burslem, in the county of Stafford, for the sum of £33 of lawful money of Great Britain, all that plot, piece, or parcel of land, or ground, situate, lying and being in Burslem aforesaid, being part of a certain close, or parcel of land, or ground called Kiln Croft." The land was nineteen yards in length and twelve in breadth.

On that site Mr. Job Ridgway himself, and at his own cost, built a chapel to which he gave the name of *Zoar*: but which was generally called, then as now "The Salt Box." The chapel must have been opened about the end of 1798, or in the spring of 1799, for in the Minutes of Conference held in May of 1799, it was reported that twelve chapels had been opened during the year, and among them was one at Burslem. The architectural design was plain in the

extreme, and innocent of anything that could be called ornate. Its chief beauty was the noble lives of the men and women who worshipped within its walls, and its principal attraction was the glory of the Lord which filled the



OLD ZOAR CHAPEL as it is at present.

place. It was a commodious building for those times, with a gallery on three sides, and afforded accommodation for five hundred people. There were no trustees, and therefore, no trustees' meetings. Mr. Job Ridgway was the sole rightful

owner, and when he died, he left the whole of his estate, personal and real, to his two sons, John and William. They then became the joint owners of Zoar Chapel.

The books and documents of those early days are very scarce, and those which are extant have many blank pages, which must necessarily, make gaps in this review that can neither be filled up nor bridged over. Yet sufficient data remain to reveal the sterling qualities of those godly souls who formed that Church.

Twenty two years had passed since Robert Raikes commenced his first Sunday School in Bristol, and the movement had gripped the religious sentiment of the nation, and Sunday Schools were being formed here and there, throughout the United Kingdom. Moreover, Robert Raikes' system of *paid teachers* was being rapidly superseded by voluntary service cheerfully rendered by earnest bands of men and women whose hearts God had touched.

At that time—in 1802, a Sunday School was founded in Zoar Chapel, on the "Gratuitous" system, as it was then called. We are unable to give the names of the founders, but on a document, dating from the early years of 1817 to 1821, the following names appear, some of which are still with us in their descendants of the third and fourth generations:—John Cartlidge, Joseph Meir, Joseph Hawley, John Latimore, John Mansfield, Thomas Moore, Jonah Read, William Holt, Edward Withenshaw, Thomas Collins, John Collins, William Stacey, Matthew Ashworth, George Mullock, James Baddaley, and John Williams.

There is evidence that, from the first, the Sunday School was worked with much vigour and enterprise. Like King Hezekiah, in every work they began in the service of the house of God, they did it with all their heart, and prospered. The object of the school was twofold, viz: the secular education and the spiritual culture of the scholars. The facilities for elementary education in the country were exceedingly

meagre, and yet such facilities were sadly needed. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, and a good way into it, forty five men out of every hundred, and sixty five women out of every hundred, could not write their own name; and a large proportion of the people were unable to tell the letters of the alphabet. It was therefore imposed on the Sunday Schools, by the stern necessity of the times, to impart secular, as well as religious education. The old Zoar School accepted this obligation and taught the rudiments of reading, spelling, and writing. It is interesting, in these days of advanced Sunday School teaching and methods, to remind ourselves of the system and curriculum of that period. There was no infant class, nor yet an adult class. Those were developments; and were somewhat late in coming. It was not until fifty years after the establishment of Sunday Schools, that they came to be fully recognized as important departments of the organization. The Schools were simply graded on the following plan:—

First Class—Letter Card—Alphabet.

Second „ —Spelling Card—Words of four letters.

Third „ —Lower Spelling Book.—Words of one and two syllables.

Fourth „ —Higher Spelling Book—Any lessons in the book.

Fifth „ —The New Testament.

Sixth „ —The Bible.

To this writing was added.

Such was the method on which Old Zoar School was conducted.

In these times of burning social questions, when so much is being said about the duty of the Church in relation to the physical needs of the people, it is not a little gratify-

ing to find that in the earliest days of Zoar, attempts were made in that direction. Habits of thrift were fostered, and the making of provision for a rainy day encouraged in the establishment of "Zoar Chapel Relief Society." And in a code of "Rules and Articles," carefully prepared, and written like copper plate, "in the year of our Lord, 1809," the object of the Society was duly set forth, which was: "The raising by voluntary subscriptions, of a joint stock, or fund, for the mutual relief of all and every of the said members in old age, sickness or infirmity." At that early date the subject of women's rights was not to the fore, and such rights were certainly not recognised by that Society. For only male teachers and scholars of "Zoar Chapel Sunday School," who were between the ages of sixteen and thirty four years, were eligible for membership: provided always that the Committee were fully assured that the applicant was free from any known infirmity. The "Rules and Articles" were most stringent and exacting, and were enforced with the utmost rigour. Should any member be guilty of a violation of them, he was expelled and the money he had paid forfeited. Articles 5 and 6, determined the premiums to be paid and the benefit to be received. Each member was required to pay one shilling as entrance fee, and one shilling per month subscription. In case of arrears, a fine was imposed, of twopence for the first month, sixpence for the second, a shilling for the third, and if arrears and fines were not paid in the fourth month, the member was expelled, unless the committee were convinced that non-payment arose from sheer inability. If any member, through sickness, lameness, or any other bodily infirmity, was rendered incapable of earning his livelihood, providing he had not brought his illness on himself by any disorderly way of living, he was entitled to receive an allowance of 5/- per week for three months, and after that period 3/- per week. This Society was made a

binding link to the School, and should any member cease to be a teacher or scholar, except for reasons that satisfied the authorities, he was expelled, and lost all he had paid.

The management was entrusted to a steward, clerk and a strong committee of five men, annually elected by the popular vote of the people. As a stimulus to regular attendance at the monthly meetings, a carefully ruled register was prepared. But alas! for the degeneracy even of those "good old times," either the clerk failed in his good intentions to mark the register, or the officers and committee soon grew weary in well doing, for no year furnished a record of more than two attendances for any one of them. Nevertheless, the Society survived for a goodly number of years, and rendered excellent service to its members.

It should be mentioned that a day school was kept in Zoar Chapel by Mr. Steven Brougham, and was attended by Rev. Dr. Cooke, when a boy. It was an academy of some importance, and supplied secular education to the children of many of the most respectable families in Burslem.



CHAPTER V.

Zoar.—(continued.)

THE bond of sympathy and affection between the Sunday School and the Church has always been strong in these parts, each organization maintaining towards the other those mutual and helpful relations which have ever made for the growth and strength of both. Their objects and aims are identical, and the interests of one are the interests of the other. They both seek the glory of God in the regeneration and salvation of their fellow men.

The Church and Sunday School at old Zoar were no exception to this. The men of God who did such heroic work in the School were the main spring in the Society, and they knew something of the devouring zeal of the Lord's House. They were men of holy fervour and burning passion in the service of their God. The fire of which Mr. Wesley spake in his days, still glowed in their hearts, and they were not afraid to lift up their voice and cry aloud. Rev. Andrew Lynn, Senr. writing of his first service at Zoar, says: "The Spirit of God moved powerfully among the people, their feelings were touched, and they began to pour out their Amens like claps of thunder. Oh! what a shout we had! Such a race of *Ameurs*, I never heard in any part of the Connexion. We had a glorious time."

But their shouting was no mere ebullition of momentary excitement without the solidity and depth of moral convictions and principles. The root of the matter was in them. They were men of sterling qualities, strict integrity, deep spirituality, and intense earnestness in seeking the salvation of souls, and in exercising a kindly, sympathetic oversight of sick and negligent members. The minutes of the Leaders' meetings, "Leaders' Boards," as they were then called, are refreshing and inspiring records. The pity is, that more of them were not preserved. For the cultivation of brotherly love, the "Board" recommended on 14th July, 1814, "That the leaders occasionally exchange their duties, and lead each other's classes, at such times as they may deem expedient; such a measure having a tendency to keep alive a spirit of brotherly affection, and to stir the people up to more watchfulness in their Christian walk." In a subsequent record they show their interest in the sick of the Church, and their concern for those who were giving signs of lukewarmness and declension in the life of faith. The resolution reads as follows: "That any of the members of the society, who may be in a state of affliction, shall always be mentioned at this Board by their leaders; as likewise any persons who do not regularly attend their class; in order that the preacher may visit them, and minister such spiritual advice as their circumstances may require."

That was a wholesome custom, which might have been retained in our modern churches with advantage to all concerned. Those leaders were real shepherds, and looked after their flocks with a tenderness and solicitude which strengthened the weak, and kept many in the fold who, otherwise would have wandered away.

Then, there were to be no favourites, nor favouritism in the Church. Even the delegates to the Quarterly meeting were to be elected with the strictest impartiality. In the same year, 1814, it was resolved: That the delegates to

Quarter Day, shall be taken in their regular turn of duty from a *Roster*—(register) to be kept for the purpose by the Steward; which *Roster* shall be entered in the Society's book by the Steward, for the use and inspection of this Board, and for the guidance and information of his successors in office."

Strict propriety was also observed in dealing with probable candidates for membership. Everything had to be done with proper decorum, and in a way that reflected credit upon the church. A previous resolution, earnestly recommending the leaders to submit the names of all seriously disposed persons to that Board, had evidently not worked well, and some trouble had been caused; so on January 29th, 1821, it was rescinded, and the following substituted, "That in order to prevent irregularity and misunderstanding in the manner of our first inviting serious persons to our class meetings, and also for the better ordering of our conduct towards them during their probation, the following particulars shall be strictly adhered to, viz: when ever a leader shall observe any person regularly and seriously attending the preaching of the word, or by any other means manifesting a desire to flee from the wrath to come, (provided he be acquainted with the person and character of the individual) he shall be at liberty to embrace the first opportunity of inviting him to a class meeting, always endeavouring to ascertain whether a prior invitation has been given by any other leader, in which case he shall desist from further importunity. But should the individual be a stranger to him, he shall bring him under the notice of the next ensuing Leaders meeting, which shall adopt such measures, and give such directions as shall appear most prudent." Surely those people did their utmost to preserve "the spirit of unity in the bond of peace," and such painstaking efforts to avoid friction and maintain harmony deserved to succeed.

Moreover, no one was allowed to slip into membership by any back door or side entrance, unrecognised and unobserved. They insisted on a *public* admission of all new members, in the following manner:— After their names had passed through their respective classes with approbation, they were required to assemble with their leaders in the singing pew immediately after the close of the public service, when their names would be called over by the steward and they would stand up; then the steward would present them with a ticket as a token of Church fellowship. It is pleasing to find that in those early days, admission into the church was made a matter of such importance and solemnity. It is treated too lightly now, and that may account for the many feeble and inactive lives that are to be found in our own ranks. While the methods of our fathers may, with advantage, be modified, yet the custom of *public* admission should be observed, and the occasion should be felt to be one of the most solemn in a person's life.

While the greatest desire prevailed among the Leaders of Zoar Society to bring people in their fellowship, and to foster and develop the virtues of a Christly life in those who came, they nevertheless exercised discipline when required with the utmost rigour; and not only upon the rank and file of members, but upon themselves also. They had a short way of dealing with malcontents and refractory persons, even if found in official circles. On the 27th March 1815, it was solemnly resolved: "That it is essentially necessary to preserve due order at this Board; that after a vote shall have been passed by a majority, no member shall afterwards dispute the subject, but having due regard to discipline, shall immediately adopt the resolution passed as his own, and attend to it in his line of duty. Should any member dispute the validity of a resolution passed by his brethren, or refuse to be guided thereby, he shall be considered as not worthy

of an official situation amongst us, and be removed from his place at this Board."

In such an atmosphere and soil, we are not surprised that they grew strong and sturdy men—men who rendered yeoman service, not only in their own church, but throughout a wide and scattered circuit. They also gave William Ford to the ministry. He was a man of great power, and attained considerable eminence in the Connexion. We append a short sketch of his life. He was born at Holly Bank Farm, near Longton, February 13th, 1798. His parents after a



REV. WILLIAM FORD.

while removed to Burslem, and he attended Zoar Sunday School. In 1814 "the Society was blessed with a plenitude of Divine influence which extended to the School, and many of the teachers and elder scholars were converted, and became exemplary members of the Church." William Ford was among them, being then about sixteen years of age. George Shaw was at that time an intelligent and devout

leader at Zoar Chapel and interested himself in young people. William joined his class, and ever after regarded him, with much affection, as his spiritual father. There was a Mutual Improvement Class even in those days for the mental culture of the young, and he attended it and derived much stimulus and profit from it. Then doors of usefulness began to open, which loving friends encouraged him to enter. He must have made great progress in the Christian life, for in twelve months after his conversion he was appointed Assistant Leader of a class at Longport, "a village near Burslem." This was probably the commencement of our Zion Church, Dalehall. His first attempt at preaching was made at Burslem Wakes, July 6th, 1815. He was then seventeen years of age, and in the following year was put on the plan as a local preacher on trial. He had a warm heart, a ready utterance and great earnestness of spirit, and was both popular and useful in the pulpit. In 1817 he was sent to supply the Macclesfield circuit for a short time, during the absence of the preacher on Connexional business; and afterwards to Alnwick, also as supply. At the next Conference 1818, he was received as a minister on probation, and stationed at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

At the age of nineteen he prepared a code of "Rules and Hints for the regulation of his studies and general conduct, for the glory of God." He began to practice them at once, and continued all through his life. They are very lengthy and minute, and we can quote only a few, which we do for the benefit of our young people. "Have six hours sleep, from ten at night until four in the morning. Read the Bible and have private prayer three times a day, and family worship twice a day. Guard against wandering thoughts and careless indifference. Maintain continual intercourse with God. Cultivate holy feelings and good thoughts, and watch and pray against evil. Be always learning something. Leave nothing until to morrow which

might be done to day. Use plainness of speech and aim to be understood. Keep from offensive and unbecoming habits in little things. Examine myself every night and review the doings of the day before retiring to rest. Read these rules over every week and discover any omission there may be in the keeping of them."

He was a man of good physique, with a strong, but mellow voice, and genial and sympathetic disposition which won the hearts of the people among whom he laboured, while his business abilities placed him in many honourable and responsible positions in the Connexion. He was twice elected President of Conference, viz: at Hanley in 1835, and at Nottingham in 1845. He assisted in the preparation of the *Model Deed*, which secures Chapels, Sunday Schools, and other trust property to the Connexion. His name appears on that Deed, which was enrolled in the High Court of Chancery, 4th January 1847. It was also, by his exertions mainly, that the *Chapel Fund* was established in 1840, the object of which is to afford relief to chapels in financial difficulties, and promote wise and judicious administration of Trust Estates. He was appointed its first secretary, and filled the office sixteen years. He was also a Guardian Representative of the Connexion. Few men have rendered more notable connexional service. He died February 16th 1859, and was interred in the Crypt underneath Bethesda Chapel Hanley. Old Zoar had every reason to be proud of her son in the Ministry.

CHAPTER VI.

Zoar—After.

THERE are hallowed memories and associations about a building that has been used for the worship of God which preserve its sanctity for many years after it has ceased to fulfil the purpose for which it was erected. The delightful seasons spent within its walls, the times of spiritual refreshing, the manifestations of the Divine Presence and power in the awakening and conversion of souls, the noble characters that were moulded and developed under its influence, and the Christly work done there by zealous and loving hearts are remembered, and spoken of. Parents tell the story to their children, "Shewing to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done" that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." We never entirely lose interest in "the old place," and are always ready to listen to snatches of its history. It was so with Old Zoar. We left it in 1824, but its very dust had become sacred to many hearts, and to this day there lingers in many minds a feeling of veneration almost amounting to reverence, for the place which to our fathers was often "the Gate of Heaven." The question is asked

by this generation : "What became of Old Zoar after we left ?" That question we proceed to answer. Its subsequent history is full of interest. It continued to be a house of prayer and holy ministries, and splendid work was done for God within its walls.

After the building of Bethel, the brothers, John and William Ridgway, who had inherited Zoar Chapel under their father's will, sold it on 7th February, 1825, to Mr. Aaron Sant, of Burslem, for £370; and before the purchase was completed, and the indenture signed, Mr. Sant let it to the Independents, who were then worshipping in a hired room in Navigation Road, where, in 1821, a church had been formed consisting of seven members. The rent paid was £40 per year. But that created a burden which the handful of people were unable to carry, and after struggling with it for two years they terminated their tenancy, and the place was closed for seven weeks. The people, however, took heart again, and ultimately purchased the chapel for £360, the conveyance being made, in 1828, to Rev. William Newland, Minister of the Tabernacle, Hanley, who had greatly interested himself in the establishment of an Independent Church in Burslem, and eight other trustees. This church occupied it for twelve years, until they built their new chapel, in Queen Street, in 1837. During those twelve years they had a somewhat remarkable succession of ministers. Rev. J. Conder was the first, and was followed by Rev. John Allen, who in turn was succeeded by Rev. J. Young. Then came Rev. William Dallison, a popular preacher, and greatly beloved by his own people and the town in general; but his attractive and faithful ministry was cut short by that fell disease—consumption. The vacancy was filled by Rev. Samuel Barton Schofield, who retained the pastorate 34 years. The work of God greatly prospered under the ministry of Mr. Schofield, and in three or four years after his settlement, Queen Street

Chapel was built, and the church removed thither. Old Zoar was then sold to Rev. Robert Aitkin, of the "Christian Society," for the sum of £400. This tenure, however, only continued five years, and in 1842, Zoar changed hands again, being sold, this time, to the Primitive Methodists for £340. These good people were then worshipping in a small chapel in Navigation Road, to which were attached six cottages. They were not able to take immediate possession of their new place; so for two years Zoar Chapel was let as a Mechanics' Institute. When, however, they had disposed of their old chapel and cottages, they completed the purchase and entered upon the larger accommodation which Zoar afforded.

Here our Primitive Methodist friends did excellent work, and made an inspiring record of self sacrifice and holy enthusiasm in the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. During their occupancy important structural alterations were made in the chapel. The building was raised, and a new roof put on; new pews were also placed inside, and a porch built at the entrance, at a total cost of £400. Subsequently an adjoining cottage, with land attaching, was bought for a caretaker's house, and at a later date another cottage was secured and a Sunday School erected on the sites acquired. For thirty six years they occupied old Zoar, until in 1878, they removed to their new and more spacious premises in Church Street, called—"The Clowes Memorial Church."

Zoar Chapel with its Sunday School, again passed into other hands. Mr. John Smith, the foster-father of our present Mr. G. E. S. Brooks, became the purchaser, and "converted" it into a place for the making of casks, skips, hampers, etc. which business is still carried on there by Mr. Brooks.

Surely old Zoar had a remarkable history, and had its walls the gift of speech, what glorious tales they might unfold.

ELIAS HAWLEY.

Through the kindness of Mr. E. Tushingham information has just been received respecting the founder of Bethel Sunday School, Elias Hawley, which will be of interest to our readers. A photo has also been secured. It was copied from a portrait in an old locket which has been preserved as a family heirloom. As the book is now in the press, the information is placed here, which is the only space available.



MR. ELIAS HAWLEY,
The Founder of Bethel Sunday
School, 1802.

Elias Hawley was born at Boonhill, near Audley, Staffordshire, in the year 1764. Though as a child he cultivated a seriousness of thought and habit, it was not until he had attained the age of 25 years that he surrendered himself to God. The circumstances leading to his conversion were peculiar. He was a lover of the prevailing sports of the times, and excelled in ball throwing and card playing. A card playing match had been arranged between five or six potters, and some of their friends at Edgmont, Shropshire, which took place during the Christmas Holidays in 1788. Mr. Hawley and his associates tramped twenty-six miles in snow and storm to the appointed place. The game was commenced and continued for some hours. As midnight drew near, Mr. Hawley became mysteriously and powerfully affected, his countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, and his knees smote one against another. He put down his cards, arose from his seat, and left the room. His companions laughed, ridiculed, admonished, entreated, but he solemnly vowed that he would never touch a card again. The arrow of conviction was

deep in his soul, and he began to attend the Methodist Chapel in Burslem, and some months after, in his own house, he received the assurance of his acceptance with God, and became a useful member of the Church.

In 1796 he entered into the struggle for Ecclesiastical liberty, and when the separation took place he joined the New Connexion, and was among the little band who commenced the cause in the cottage in Hot Lane; and with them afterwards removed to Zoar Chapel.

The outlook of the New Society in 1801 was not very promising, and, on Christmas Day of that year, Mr. Hawley sat in the Chapel much discouraged and depressed, when the thought came to him that a *Sunday School* might prove to be the salvation of the place. He consulted his friends; the idea was approved and accepted, and means were adopted to give it practical effect. A circular was issued, and distributed throughout the town, setting forth the object contemplated, and inviting the co-operation of parents and friends; and in March following (1802) the school was duly opened and established. From that time a quickened interest was manifested in all departments of the Church, and the people rejoiced in much prosperity.

Mr. Hawley was an active and enthusiastic worker. He filled many important offices both in the Sunday School and the Church, and also served the Circuit as a local preacher. When failing health compelled him to resign his position as Class Leader, the Leaders Meeting passed the following resolution: "That this meeting, duly appreciating the services Brother Elias Hawley has rendered to this Society for the last twenty-four years, begs to express its acknowledgment of the same, and being desirous still to secure his assistance and advice, do hereby request his

acceptance of a seat among us as an honorary member, so long as health and circumstances shall enable him to attend." This mark of appreciation and affection greatly cheered him, and he retained his seat among his brethren in the administration of affairs until he was called up higher.

When the New Chapel (Bethel) was commenced, though in feeble health, he undertook to superintend the building, and zealously watched the laying of almost every brick, and when the day of opening arrived he was filled with holy gladness, and cried: "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

But his hour had not yet come. For three years longer he was spared, and in 1827 was able to take a service in Bethel. It was his last public effort, and he preached an impressive sermon from the words: "The end of all things is at hand." He entered into rest, Nov. 23rd, 1828. "A good and faithful servant."

THE ORIGINAL LICENCE.

While writing the above an important and valuable document came to hand in the form of the original licence of Zoar Chapel. It was found among documents left in the minister's house at Hanley, and kindly forwarded to me by Rev. M. Bartram.

[COPY.]

"I do hereby certify, that at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace of our Lord, the King, holden at Stafford, in, and for the County of Stafford, upon Thursday, the Tenth day of October, in the year of our Lord, One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Ninety nine, a

certain Chapel, situate and being at Burslem, in the said County of Stafford, was registered and recorded as a place for the Public Worship of Almighty God, for Protestant Dissenters, Pursuant to the statute in that behalf made.

*Witness my hand the Eighteenth Day of December,
1799,*

WILLIAM KEEN.

*Dy. Clerk of the Peace,
for the said County of Stafford.*



CHAPTER VII.

Bethel.

THE old coach road from Burslem to Hanley took a circuitous route down Bourne's Bank, up Commercial Street, out opposite the Washington Works, then into Nile Street, and through the Toll Bar in Hot Lane, along Elder Road, past the old Providence Chapel, down Cobridge Road, through Boothem Lane, and into Brook's Street, Hanley. The condition of the road, so narrow and uneven, with its sharp turnings, steep banks, and precipitous descents, did not conduce to the comfort, nor safety, of either passengers or horses.

In 1815, an Act of Parliament was passed empowering the authorities to make a new and direct road between the two towns. The royal assent was given to the Act within a few days of the battle of Waterloo, and on the second anniversary of that battle the fine straight thoroughfare was opened as a public highway under the name of Waterloo Road. Fragments of brass plates, and soldiers' buttons are said to be embedded in a stone at the entrance of the road at the Burslem end.

Almost immediately, houses, many of them large and stately for those times, began to spring up on both sides of the road, until the land was completely covered as we see it to-day.

The Church and Sunday School at Old Zoar had outgrown the accommodation afforded by their building, and it was necessary for further development that larger and more ample premises be secured. The men of that church were



BETHEL.

evidently far-seeing and sagacious. They saw the immense advantage of a good site, and a commanding position for the House of the Lord. Waterloo Road was the popular thoroughfare, and always would be, people were flocking there, and there the new chapel should be. Mr. John Ridgway, and his brother William, with others, therefore secured the site on which Bethel now stands. It was glebe land formerly belonging to the Rectory of Burslem. The site measured on the westerly side, 89 ft. 3 ins. ; easterly side, 96 ft. ;

northerly side, 87 ft. ; southerly side, 87 ft.—900 superficial square yards, or thereabouts. The original trustees were John Ridgway, William Ridgway, Philip Brookes, William Wear, Jonah Read, Joseph Hawley, Thomas Massey, William Ball, John Tunncliffe, Thomas Finney, James Bailey, William Tomkinson, and Timothy Rigby.

The land being secured, it was not long before building operations were commenced. The foundation stones were laid on the 19th of June, 1824, at six o'clock in the morning, before a large assembly of people, who had gathered from all parts of the circuit and district. Prayer was offered by Rev. C. Atkinson, the second preacher, and addresses were delivered by Rev. J. Manners, superintendent of the circuit, and Messrs. John and William Ridgway. It was a real red-letter day for those earnest people, and the crowning triumph was achieved at the opening of the new sanctuary, on December 26th, of the same year. Rev. Simeon Woodhouse preached in the morning an appropriate sermon from the text "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." The afternoon service was conducted by Rev. W. Shuttleworth, who based his discourse on the words "Take heed how ye hear." In the evening, Rev. Thomas Allen preached with his usual ability from Isaiah's vision, when he saw the Lord on a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple—Isa. vi., 1, 2, 3. The congregations were large, especially in the evening, when many were unable to obtain admission. The collections for the day amounted to £80, and previous subscriptions £170, making a total of £250, and leaving a debt of £1,500. The dimensions of the chapel were 48 ft. by 54 ft., not including the orchestra and vestries at the back.

Bethel at this time, and for some years after, was part of the Hanley Circuit, which was very wide. In its earlier history it included Stafford and Pankridge. In 1840 it

comprised no less than twenty-one places, viz :—Hanley, Newcastle, Burslem, Cobridge, Etruria, Bucknall, Tunstall, Knutton, Upper Hanley, Northwood, Werrington, Blakley Lane, Congleton, Wolstanton, Harpfield, Bedford, Eastwood Vale, Smallthorne, Hot Lane, But Lane, and Dalehall.

A circuit so large and covering so wide an area, was not easy either to manage or work, and it was found necessary to adopt means by which it could be brought into a more workable compass. Steps were therefore taken to *sectionalize* it, and it was ultimately divided into sections while still continuing to be one circuit. At the April Quarterly Meeting 1850, it was resolved:—"That the circuit be formed into sections after the following plan, viz :—Hanley, with Upper Hanley, Bedford, Etruria, Bucknall, Werrington and Eastwood Vale to form one section, with the Superintendent preacher. Newcastle, with Knutton, Harpfield and Wolstanton to form another section, with one married preacher. Burslem with Cobridge, Tunstall, Dalehall, Smallthorne, Hot Lane and Congleton, to form another section, also with one married preacher. While Newcastle was always before Burslem on the plan the second preacher resided at the latter place.

It will be observed that during the preceding ten years three places had dropped out, having probably joined some other circuit, or been absorbed in larger churches.

The resolutions of the Quarterly Meeting bearing on this matter furnish interesting reading as showing the cordial and brotherly relations which existed in the circuit, and the intense desire for the glory of God in the extension of His kingdom in the earth. Each "District" (Section) was to have equal to the full amount of one preacher's labours, and pay the expenses thereof, and the head of each District was to make such arrangements with its "dependencies" as would ensure the necessary money being forthcoming at every Quarter

Day, that the circuit may be kept out of debt. There was to be an interchange of circuit and local preachers on the Lord's Day as may be found satisfactory and practicable. The week-night services were arranged so as to give the superintendent to Hanley once a fortnight, and the others to have a preponderance in their own District. The preachers at Newcastle and Burslem were practically superintendents of their own Districts, but were assisted by, and responsible to, the superintendent at Hanley, and they were required by the Quarterly Meeting to meet together frequently for mutual encouragement and counsel. The local preachers received due recognition, and their fund was to continue as before, only receiving more general support. New ground was to be broken up, and additional places supplied by each District and submitted to the consideration of the Quarterly Meeting. In each District a Committee was appointed to assist the preacher in watching over its interests and promoting its welfare, and the three Committees formed one general council for the mutual protection and advancement of the circuit and the Connexion. Then a Special Circuit Meeting of a holy, and refreshing character was to be held as soon as possible after Conference that "the plan adopted under Providence may be begun in the spirit of Christian union, and faith, and prayer." That was to be followed by a Special Circuit Lovefeast at Hanley, and by others at Newcastle and Burslem, as soon as may be conveniently arranged afterwards. Special visitation was ordered to the sick and infirm, also to Probationary and Catechumen Classes, and to Sunday, Day, and Week-night Schools. And the whole arrangements were crowned with the following delightful resolution, viz.:—"In short, that love be the cement of the Districts, as it has been of the Circuit, but in a more abundant degree, and to this end all our endeavours shall be directed to our mutual good, in the spirit of believing prayer, and a devout reliance upon the

blessing of the Almighty on each and every Hill of our Zion and our beloved Connexion." We cannot read those minutes without feeling that they who made and passed them were holy men of God, men who were possessed of the Spirit of their Master, and were inflamed with a passionate love for Him and the souls He died to redeem.

The arrangement however, though made with so much solicitude and prayer, did not work so satisfactorily as was desired, and in the following year, 1851, Burslem section became a separate Circuit, Bethel being the head of it.



MR. A. BOULTON.
Connecting Link between Past and Present.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bethel.

Head of the New Circuit.

AT this juncture, Bethel, having been promoted to the honourable position of Head of a separate and independent circuit, was considered to be capable of managing its own affairs without the guiding and fostering hand of its parents. Important changes were therefore effected in the constitution of the trust, legal settlements were made, and the estate considerably enlarged. The land measured 900 superficial square yards, on which stood the chapel, schools, and the preacher's house.

On the 12th September 1851, an adjoining plot of land, measuring 450 superficial square yards, with two cottages, was purchased from John Tunnicliffe, for £150. That is the site on which the Dr. Cooke Memorial School now stands, and the caretaker's house is one of the cottages. On the 27th October, of the same year, the two estates were consolidated in one legal settlement, and conveyed to a new body of trustees, Mr. William Scott, of Caudon Place, Hanley, acting as intermediary. The New Trust was composed of the following persons, some of whom were on the original, viz : William Ball, Jonah Simpson Read, John Tunnicliffe, Joseph Hawley, William Tomkinson, Timothy Rigby, John Woolrich, John Ball, Samuel Wood, Joseph Meir, Charles Ball, John Wildblood, Peter Capper, George Hill, George Robinson,

Jonathan Stevenson, Enoch Mountford, Joseph Moreton, James Bentley, and John Hawley. This conveyance was made, according to the provisions of the MODEL DEED, and thus the property was secured to the Connexion. The whole estate as then conveyed, and as we now have it, measured 1350 superficial square yards.

Bethel was now on its own basis. Mr. John Ridgway, and the Hanley friends, who had rendered excellent service from the commencement, withdrew, and all the trustees were local men.

Two years after the above appointment, (1853) the chapel, schools, and preacher's house were repaired and renovated. Two additional windows were also put in the chapel, the cornice of the ceiling was enlarged four-fold, pilasters placed on either side of the orchestra surmounted by a neatly designed architrave, and new and improved gas fittings introduced. The total cost amounted to £190, of which £140 8s. 6d. was raised by the time the re-opening services were concluded, and the balance afterwards. Sermons were preached on the first Sunday by Rev. John Poxon, and on the second Sunday by Rev. F. Hemming, a gifted and popular anti-slavery lecturer from America. The Chapel was reported to be "The neatest and most comfortable place of worship in the Potteries," a credit to the town and an honour to the Connexion.

The general arrangement of the pews continued as before. There were not many in the body. The children's seats were on either side, the adult free seats in the centre, with a few pews behind them, and the place was heated by two large stoves placed near the entrance. But this was subsequently altered. Pews were put in the place of the children's forms, and also in place of the free seats, those being put on either side the door. Improvements were made in the windows, and heating by the modern

system of hot-water, took the place of the old stoves. In 1883, further improvements and structural alterations were effected. The portico was added to the front of the Chapel, and the windows modernized by circular heads, and large panes, surrounded by tinted glass.

The original pulpit was of what is vulgarly called "the tub style," supported by four pillars, and approached through the orchestra. It was afterwards altered and stood on a centre pedestal, and was reached by means of a



MR. J. STEVENSON,
Trust Secretary.

moderately long flight of stairs ; but ultimately it gave place to the present handsome and modern rostrum, so much admired, and of which we are justly proud.

On June 7th, 1872, during the ministry of Rev. J. C. Watts (afterwards D.D.), another appointment of Trustees was made. The following continued in the Trust, viz.:— Joseph Meir, George Hill, Jonathan Stevenson, and John

Hawley; to whom were added John Watkin, Alfred Boulton, Taylor Hughes Tomkinson, Frederic William Tomkinson, John Smith, Henry George Ball, Thomas Cope, William Mellor, Robert Mellor, Henry Baines, George Henry Till, Henry Lee, David Hitchen, Herbert Weatherby, James Goodwin, and Henry Barnett.

The last appointment was made on January 21st, 1892, during the ministry of the Rev. T. Stoneley, the remaining



MR. W. GOODWIN,
Pew Steward.

trustees being—Joseph Meir, George Hill, Thomas Cope, William Mellor, and Robert Mellor; and those added were Mitchel Holt, James Bowden, Alfred Henry Boulton, Frederick Malkin, Amos Linney, Edward Tushingham, Edward Griffiths, William Barnett, John Beeston, Edward Goodall, William Goodwin, Richard Henry Walton, Joseph Stevenson, John Henry Ford, and Thomas Rigby.

A successful Bazaar was held during Mr. Stoneley's appointment, by which £500 was raised, which was devoted to the renovation of the premises, the enlargement of the Organ, and the paying off of floating debts. During the ministry of Rev. M. Bartram, the Connexional Centenary was celebrated, and an effort was made by which the sum of £523 was realised, and was used for the reduction of debt on the estate.

The minister's house was built at the same time as the old schools. In the late sixties the roof was raised, giving an additional large bedroom at the back; and on May 8th, 1888, a tender was accepted for extensive alterations, amounting to £188 10s. 0d., which with extras, was brought up to considerably over £200.

The organ was placed in the Chapel in 1847 at a cost of £180, and was built by Messrs. Nicholson, of Rochdale, but was only about half its present size. It had two manuals, but no pedals, these being added some years later and costing £80. It remained in that form until the general alteration of the Chapel in 1883, when at a cost of £40 another stop was added, and the bellows re-made and enlarged. During the superintendency of Rev. T. Stoneley, a further sum of £130 was expended in the replacing of old stops and the adding of new ones, and the putting of pneumatic action to the pedals. These alterations and improvements were carried out by Messrs. Steele and Keay, Organ Builders, of Burslem. At that time the organ was carried back and extended at the sides, so as to give another row of seats to the choir. The orchestra now accommodates about thirty-five singers.

The composition of the organ at the present time is as follows, viz:—Two manuals C and C to F., $4\frac{3}{8}$ octaves, pneumatic pedals, C C C to F.



THE ORGAN AND ROSTRUM.

Composition of swell organ—

Double Diapason	16 feet	54 pipes.
Open	8	54
Stop	8	54
Voil de Gamba	8	42
Voix Celeste	8	42
Principal	4	54
Fifteenth	2	54
Oboe	8	54

GREAT ORGAN.			
Open Diapason	8 feet	54	pipes.
Stop ..	8 ..	54	..
Clarabella ..	8 ..	42	..
Dulciana ..	8 ..	42	..
Keraulophan ..	8 ..	42	..
Principal ..	4 ..	54	..
Flute ..	4 ..	54	..
Twelfth ..	2 $\frac{1}{2}$..	54	..
Fifteenth ..	2 ..	54	..
			<hr/>
			450



MR. A. HEATH.
Organist.

PEDALS.		
Open Diapason	16 feet	.. 30 pipes.
Bourdon	16 ..	30 ..
		<hr/>
Couplers		60
Swell to great.	Swell to pedals.	Great to pedals.
TOTAL PIPES.		
Great Organ		450
Swell ..		408
Pedal ..		60
		<hr/>
		918

The original organ was opened November 28th, 1847, sermons being preached, morning and evening, by Rev. W. Mills, and in the afternoon, by Rev. Bernard Slater, Wesleyan. On the following Sunday, sermons were preached by Rev. J. H. Robinson. The collections amounted to £56 7s. 3d., and subscriptions to £106 6s. 9d. Previous to the organ there were double bass fiddles, and other string



MR. J. DAVIDSON,
Choir Master.

and brass instruments, and even these were not kept in repair without expense. Early church accounts contain such items as: "Bass string and bridge, 10/6," and "repairing of bass, 1/11."

The present choir numbers thirty-one members, with an average attendance of twenty-six, morning and evening, and is always ready to co-operate, most heartily, in every effort for the welfare of the Church or Sunday School.



M^R. W. E. ROBINSON,
Church Treasurer,

The Church, until ten years ago, was worked on old Methodist lines. After the revision of the Connexional Rules, in 1889, which altered the conditions of membership, the class meeting, which had been declining for a number of years, soon became extinct in many churches, and Bethel was one of them. But the abolition of that helpful and inspiring institution of Methodism has not proved a blessing to the Connexion, and no place has suffered more than Bethel. We are glad, however, to find, from reports submitted to the last Conference, that 79 circuits, representing 31,405 members, have voted for the return of the class meeting; only one circuit voting against it, and a few being neutral. We are trying in some measure to resuscitate that profitable means of grace, believing that

with it would come better days of deepened spiritual life, and more aggressive work.

The present Leaders' Meeting is composed of the following brethren, viz.: Chairman, John Young; Treasurer, William E. Robinson; Secretary, Enoch Dunning; Offertory Steward, Alfred Henry Boulton; Poor's Fund Steward, J. Sargeant (also a leader of a group); Leader of Tuesday Night Class, Arthur Johnson; Leaders of Groups, William Mellor, Joseph P. Guy, Henry J. Baines, William Goodwin, Alfred Henry Ryles, George Walker, Eli Wright. Representatives—Minister's Class, Edmund Booth; Trustees, Joseph Stevenson; Sunday School, Arthur Percy Hobson; Christian Endeavour Society, David Eardley (also a leader of a group); the Church, B. Lewis, Thomas H. Shaw.



MR. E. DUNNING.
Church Secretary.

No history of a Methodist Church would be complete which omitted to set down the good work done by devoted women. Bethel has always been blessed with such women, and is so still. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh," and thus a noble succession of those heroic and faithful toilers is kept up through the rolling years. The Ladies' Sewing Meeting is an old institution of



THE CONGREGATIONAL SEWING CIRCLE.

the Church. Who can remember the time when there was no Sewing Meeting? And during these many years some thousands of pounds must have been raised by the needle, deftly plied by loving fingers. Many financial burdens have been lightened, many renovation and improvement



THE CHOIR SEWING CIRCLE.



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL. SINGING CIRCLE.

schemes brought to a successful issue, and many annual deficiencies cleared off, by the self-sacrificing efforts of those willing workers.

The women of to-day are as loyal, and as active and vigorous in their work for the Church, as any in the past. Their hearts and hands, are always ready, and no demand seems too great for their love and devotion to meet. Not until the books of God are open, and the record of noble deeds is read in the light of the judgment seat of Christ, will it be known how much Bethel has been indebted to her honourable women.

CHAPTER IX.

Bethel Sunday Schools.

WHEN the removal was made from Old Zoar to New Bethel, no separate Sunday School premises were provided. The School was conducted in the body of the chapel, in which but few pews were fixed. This continued for eleven years amid much inconvenience and limitation alike to effort and progress. But the godly men and women of those times were earnest and pushful, and could not sit still and see the work of God "cribbed, cabined and confined," so they arose and built the Schools in 1835. These are on the north side of the chapel, and consist of three rooms, the front standing out somewhat in advance of the chapel, and the master's house is built in the same way on the south side, to harmonise.

The Sunday School had now entered on a new epoch of its history, and under improved conditions and with ampler accommodation, made encouraging progress. It is reported that at the coronation of Queen Victoria, on the 28th of June, 1838, four hundred and forty scholars walked in procession, with other schools of the town, amid great rejoicing. (1)

Writing was still taught, indeed the practice continued far into the second half of the century, and some of our friends who are yet with us, remember the long rows of desks, and the copies at the head of the writing books,

(1) Ward's History, page 245.

covered with transparent horn to keep them clean. For many years the copy books were of plain unruled paper, and the writing usually assumed an upward or downward tendency, but in later years a resolution was passed at the teachers' meeting that better facilities should be provided in that respect, and a gross of copy books with ruled lines were ordered—a luxury which was no doubt appreciated.



MR. A. H. BOULTON,
Offerory Steward.

The importance of proper mental equipment on the part of the teachers was recognised, and a library of standard works was provided, and a Theological Class held in the top vestry; and thus the teachers had the advantage of some training for the great work in which they were engaged. This is interesting in the light of the present day movement for teachers' colleges, and the demand that is becoming loud

and persistent in some quarters for an efficient Biblical and Theological training of teachers on similar lines to that of ministers, if not so extensive. Evidently those early managers of Bethel Sunday School were seers, and anticipated the spirit and practice of days to come.

The order and discipline of the school received frequent attention at the teachers' meetings, and efforts were made to repress the unruly, and cultivate proper behaviour. Guards were placed in the porch both morning and evening to prevent truant scholars from running out of chapel. Boys were not permitted to take their caps into chapel, but must leave them in the school and return for them after the service. The scholars were required to stand up during prayer, and observe a reverent demeanour in the House of God. Teachers were requested to visit their scholars at their homes, and exercise a kindly and sympathetic interest in them during the week, and sit with them in the chapel on the Sunday.

But while the records of the minute books indicate much effort in the direction of method and system in the school, there is evidence that the monopoly of failings and delinquencies was not reserved for the present times. Punctuality and regularity were not special virtues in those days. We note that quarter by quarter, with distressing reiteration, a list of teachers, and even officers, appears with the names of brethren who were appointed to interview and admonish them for unpunctual and irregular attendance, and some were informed that unless they could give a pledge of improved attention to duties, they could not be honoured with re-election to office. Things evidently improved in this respect, for in subsequent years the quarterly lists of delinquents disappeared.

They had grand "*Charities*" (Sunday School Anniversaries) in those days, for which elaborate preparations were made. There was always an original hymn written for the occasion. A poetic genius dwelt among them, and, year by year, Mr. John Faulkner was requested by resolution of the Teachers' Meeting to compose the children's hymn, which was sung in the streets as scholars and teachers walked in procession. And so popular was the event that



MR. WILLIAM MELLOR, Senior Trustee;
A long and devoted worker in all departments.

most of the town turned out to witness it, and both sides of Waterloo Road were lined with people, so closely packed (so report has it) that you might have walked on their heads. After the Evening Service the singers were regaled with tea and coffee. It is encouraging to note that the glory of "Bethel Charity" has not departed. On the 3rd of May, in this year, though the weather was unfavourable, the congregation in the

morning was excellent, and in the evening the Chapel was crowded in every part, and many were unable to gain admission; the singing was pronounced "better than ever," and the collections and subscriptions amounted to £93 13s. 1d.

That was the 100th Anniversary, and was well reported in the *Staffordshire Sentinel*, a copy of which found its way to America; and the following letter, which will be read with interest, was received by the pastor on July 29th, with the amount named therein. It gave much joy and encouragement to the teachers and workers:—

East Liverpool, Ohio, Col. County, U.S.A.

July 15th, 1903

To the Minister of Bethel, New Connexion.

DEAR SIR,

My Grandfather, Mr. Holland Manley, wishes me to write to you. He wishes to present to the Bethel Sunday School the sum of £6 7s., in memory of Mary Cartwright. That will make your Sunday School collection £100, as you have collected £93 13s. 1d. My grandmother was born in Pitt Street, Burslem, April 6th, 1833, and commenced to go to the Sunday School about 1836, and was a scholar and teacher, and member of the Bethel New Connexion, until she left in March, 1853. She was the daughter of William and Elizabeth Cartwright, and was a member of the Methodist Church here until the time of her death. Her family all belonged to the Bethel. My grandparents were united in marriage in this City, Nov. 18th, 1854, and lived in the state of matrimony 48 years, 6 months, and 10 days. My Grandma died May 28th, 1903, aged 70 years, 1 month, and 22 days. There is only one gentleman that she knew, Mr. Alfred Boulton, and he taught her to write, sixty years ago. There are not many at the Bethel who would know her now. The Rev. Mr. Boycott was the minister when she left Burslem.

I am, yours respectfully

BESSIE E. GAMBLE.

In the year 1852, the Jubilee of the School was celebrated, when every scholar was presented with a medal of white metal, bearing on the obverse side the model of the



THE JUBILEE MEDAL.

Chapel, Schools, and Minister's House, with the following inscription:—"BETHEL SABBATH SCHOOL, FOUNDED 1802. JUBILEE OF THE SCHOOL, 1852," and on the reverse side was the head of Rev. Alexander Kilham, the founder of the Connexion. Larger medals, electro-plated, were sold to teachers and friends at 5/- each. The medals were worn suspended from blue rosettes at the Jubilee "Charity," and suitable sermons and addresses were delivered, and general rejoicing prevailed.

The men who were associated with the school at the time of the Jubilee, and whose names occur and recur again and again, indicating their devotion and fidelity in the work, include—Alfred Boulton, James and Peter Capper, Joseph Meir, C. R. Hopkinson, John Mellor, Samuel Wood, William Tomkinson, Joseph Oakes, John Bridgwood, Elijah Rigby, John Watkin, George Hill, William Walker, James Goodwin, Joseph Blaize, Joseph Shaw, John Broadhurst, James Bentley, Henry Barnett, James Griffiths, John Smith. All these, except our venerable and respected father, Alfred Boulton, are fallen asleep, but many of them

have left worthy representatives in their descendants, whose love and loyalty to God do honour to those who have passed within the veil.

The Clothing Fund, in which scholars are invited to invest small weekly sums, to be withdrawn at the end of the year, is a very old auxiliary of the school. We have no date as to its commencement, the earliest record we have is dated December 31st, 1857, when the following resolution was passed at a School Committee Meeting:—"That the Clothing Fund be recommenced on Sunday week, and that the officers who carried it on last year be respectfully requested to do so this year, and that the best thanks of the Committee be presented to them." It has always been a popular institution. At one time an annual concert was held, sometimes in the Town Hall, and the proceeds given as a sort of bonus to the investors at the end of the year. Lectures have also been delivered for the object. It is as vigorous in its operation now as it ever was. There were 226 members last year, and the amount paid out was £245 2s. 4d. The present officers are:—Treasurer, Mr. Edwin J. Barnett; Secretary, Mr. John P. Mellor; Assistant Secretary, Mr. William Mountford.

Our Connexion claims the honour of being the first of the religious denominations to give official recognition to the Band of Hope. This was done at the Halifax Conference in 1869, when the Temperance and Band of Hope Union was established. Since then it has been a Connexional department under the management of a Committee annually appointed by the Conference. Bethel for many years has taken an active interest in the promotion of temperance among the young, and the Band of Hope has held an important place in the general work of the school. It was never in a more prosperous condition than at present. Mr. John P. Mellor takes the general management of it, and

is supported by a number of willing helpers. Much credit is due to them for their constancy and faithfulness in this great work.

Bethel has not been prolific in the production of ministers. Since Rev. W Ford, in 1818, none of her sons had been sent into the ministry, until 1874 when Joseph Morrey entered the ranks.



REV. JOSEPH MORREY.

Mr. Morrey was born in Hanley, July 2nd, 1853. His parents were members of Bethesda, where he attended from earliest childhood. When he was in his teens, his parents removed to Burslem and immediately joined Bethel Church, and he passed into the school, where many religious impressions were received. "One of my happiest recollections of those early days," writes Mr. Morrey, "is in the Sunday School class I attended, of which Mr. Edward Goodall was teacher. Never, I think, was any teacher more devotional.

The prayers in the class-room had much to do with my confession of Christ, and have never lost their hold on my life."

No particular date, or place, or circumstance was associated with his conversion. It was a gradual work of grace in his heart, developed under the hallowing influence of a godly home. He says, "I have often retired from the family altar with the thought that, under such influence it would seem impossible to go astray; worldliness had no attraction for me; Christ became my supreme desire."

At the age of nineteen, during the superintendency of the late Dr. Watts, he was placed on the plan as a local preacher on trial, and was sympathetically and helpfully guided in his studies by Mr. Watts (afterwards Dr.) and Rev. Lot Saxton. His labours were appreciated in the circuit, and on his twenty-first birthday he left home for Shields, where his duties as a minister commenced. His subsequent circuits have been—Hartlepool, Willington, Dewsbury, Hartlepool (second time), Cheslyn Hay, Hurst, Stockton, Oldbury and Tipton, Newark, Isle-of-Man, and Durham, where he is now labouring.



CHAPTER X.

The Dr. Cooke Memorial School.

THE Plan of the Old Schools, which was the best the site could afford, gave no large assembly hall, and the three rooms were barely sufficient to accommodate the different sections of the school, so the scholars could never meet in one gathering, except in the Chapel. There was a separate opening and closing for each section. Now, the times had outgrown such arrangements. Improvement in the architecture of Sunday Schools was becoming general. The advantage of separate class-rooms, with a large assembly hall, where the whole School could gather for opening and closing was being recognised, and the old was giving place to the new throughout the country. The trustees had had land since 1851, and people interested in the work began to ask why it was not utilized for modern school premises? Mr J P Guy did much to stimulate the project by generously offering to give the bricks and mortar if they would proceed. But it was sometime before even that tempting offer could move the responsible party, who were largely blessed with the faculty of caution. Ultimately, however, the scheme was floated, and developed somewhat larger dimensions than was originally intended. But Mr. Guy's liberality kept pace with the growing project, and the bricks and mortar were given for the enlarged School and Vestry. Plans and specifications were prepared by Mr. James Watkin, Architect and Surveyor, who gave

his services free of charge; and the contract was let to Mr. James Bowden, Builder, who successfully carried out the work.

Rev. William Cooke, D.D., being a native of Burslem, the friends naturally felt proud of him and the eminent



MR. J. P. GUY.

distinction he had attained, and it was decided to perpetuate his memory by associating his name with the New School. It was therefore, called "The Dr. Cooke Memorial School."

The Memorial Stones were laid on Monday, Sept. 10th, 1877, and a notable day it was for our denomination in this

town. There was a large gathering of friends, and eight stones "were well and truly laid." The ceremony commenced at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and after devotional exercises, the Rev. C. F. Lea, who was the young minister of the Circuit, deposited in a cavity of the building a jar, containing a Copy of the Minutes of the preceding Conference, a Circuit Plan for the current quarter, an Engraving of the New Structure, a Programme of the Day's Ceremony, a copy of the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, and a Current Coin of the Realm. Mr. W. E. Brownfield laid the first stone and gave £25. Then followed Alderman George Ridgway who laid the second and subscribed £10 10s. Mr. John Watkin laid the third and gave £10 in addition to £50 already promised. The fourth was laid by Mr. Robert Mellor, who contributed £20. Mr. James Watkin laid the fifth, and gave £10 on behalf of his wife, and Mr. Alfred Henry Boulton followed with the sixth, and subscribed £10. The seventh was laid by Mr. (afterwards Rev.) William Oakes Meir, with a contribution of £10. The last was laid by Master Robert W. Guy, aged three years, who, having been elevated to a position where he could be seen by the people, declared the stone "well and truly laid," and handed over a donation of £5 5s. from his uncle Robert, of Armley. A mallet and trowel were presented to each stone-layer. Then came bricks not a few. Mr. Smith, the treasurer, laid one for his wife and gave £5 5s.; many ladies and children followed each laying a brick and giving a guinea or half-guinea according to their means, after which a collection was made which amounted to £20 9s. 6d. Surely the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be in high spirits that day.

Rev. J. Medcraft, then President of the Conference, gave the official address. Our space will not admit of more than the barest outline of that admirable deliverance. Commencing, he said: "It would have afforded me a very high

pleasure, in ordinary circumstances, to take part in the important and interesting ceremony of this day. But the pleasure is vastly enhanced by the fact that, we are trying to do honour to one who has done so much honour to the town of his birth, and to the denomination of which he has been, and still is, so distinguished an ornament. I use no words of flattery, but only of simple truth, when I say that the name of Dr. Cooke has attained, and has deservedly attained a very unusual celebrity." He then passed on to speak of the growth and development of the Sunday School, and the marvellous and far extending influence of its work; how that influence was seen and felt in the Church, in the forge, in the workshop, in the counting-house, and even in the National Parliament. Its scholars had been sent to the ends of the earth as Missionaries of the Cross, and thus its influence had become a universal power for good. He concluded with the prayer of Moses: "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."

This was followed by a Public Tea, when 500 sat down. The subsequent meeting was held in the chapel, under the presidency of Mr. T. Hulme, Chief Bailiff of Burslem. Mr. A. Boulton gave the financial statement up-to-date, and addresses were delivered by Mr. W. Woodall, Mr. G. W. Garlick, Rev. J. Medicraft, and Rev. Dr. Cooke. The Dr. gave a short resumé of his life, which charmed and captivated the audience, and is spoken of to this day by friends who were privileged to hear it. For the benefit of the present generation and those who may follow, we give it as reported in the Connexional Magazine for October of that year.

The Doctor said, "I was born July 2nd, 1806, at the New Inn in this town, which was then far more immoral than at the present time, for the brutal sport of bull-baiting was

practised and sanctioned. Before I was six years old my parents removed to Cobridge, and while there I was taken to the Wesleyan Sabbath School at Burslem. Soon after, I attended the day school of Mr. Steven Brougham, at Tunstall, though nearly three miles from my residence. On Mr. Brougham removing his school from Tunstall to Burslem, he occupied our own Sunday School at Zoar, and here, with some of the most respectable persons in Burslem, I received my secular education.



REV. WILLIAM COORE, D.D.

When about thirteen years old, my parents removing to Shelton, I became connected with the Sunday School of our Church at Bethesda. Here I was noticed by that devoted man, Mr. Joseph Bullock, of precious memory, and along with about thirty youths of a similar age to myself, I was stimulated to religious inquiry and study by weekly questions given us to answer in writing. Soon after this I

was seized with a dangerous fever, and pious Sabbath School teachers and scholars visited me in my infected chamber, spoke to me of Christ, and prayed for my recovery and salvation. I well remember one night turning my pale face to the wall and uttering this prayer, "O God, if it be Thy holy will to remove me by death, pardon me, and prepare me for the change; but if it be Thy will that I should live, Oh, let me never sin again!" That was the turning point in my history. It pleased God to restore me to health, and henceforth I led a new life. I found mercy through Christ, and humbly, but very imperfectly, followed Him in the regeneration.

Religion stimulated in me a thirst for knowledge, and a desire for usefulness. I read the Scriptures and all the books I could get hold of to treasure up sacred truth. In due time I became a Sunday School teacher, prayer leader, tract distributor and class leader. Desirous to instruct the ignorant, I opened a gratuitous night school to instruct adults in the reading and understanding of the Scriptures.

When about eighteen I was brought on the plan, on account of my youth, as a star, and in due time I was accepted as a local preacher. In the year 1826, I was requested to become a candidate for our regular ministry, and was employed in Ireland. When first sent out I was a pale-faced youth just turned twenty, and grave men significantly shook their heads and said, 'Ah, he will soon die of consumption!' They were mistaken, for in the next month it will be fifty-one years since I entered on the work, and I am here yet, and I look better now in my seventy-second year than I did in my twentieth year. It is true I have worked hard, but hard work is a capital thing for health. Allusion has been made by preceding speakers to my writings. Well, I have written some works, and they have had an extensive circulation, but I never expected it. I had no thought of becoming an author, and never wrote but from a feeling of

necessity. I always hated controversy, and yet I have always been in it. When sent to Newcastle-on-Tyne to repair the waste places, I almost solemnly resolved to have no controversy with Mr. Barker, and yet when I saw the delapidation of Christian Churches, and the multitudes of young men led astray by his heresies, I was constrained to buckle on my armour and engage in the controversy of the ten nights' discussion.

It was under these circumstances that I commenced my work on *Christian Theology*, which was first issued in a series of tracts. In nothing of a personal kind have I felt more satisfaction than in promoting the restoration of my old antagonist. It is no egotism when I say that he was on my heart night and day. I prayed for him, and longed for his restoration. Under these feelings, I sent him a package containing a copy of each of my larger works, accompanied by a letter expressing my intense interest and longing for his restoration, begging him to accept a copy of my works, and to re-examine with candour the principles and foundation of Christianity, and earnestly seek for the truth, assuring him that as I approached nearer eternity the more happy I felt in the enjoyment of Gospel blessings. I earnestly wished that he might realize the same. He wrote me in reply, accepting thankfully my offer, and said that he was anxious to know the truth, and that if there was a God he hoped he should find Him. I followed him up from that time, got him to my house and had him on his knees. Suffice it to say, that he became a changed man, professed in a private conversation with me at his own house that he had through Christ found peace with God. Just before his death he called his eldest son, his trustee, and his physician to his bedside, and requested them to witness that he was in his right mind and knew well what he was doing, and that with his dying breath he testified his faith in Christ and the Gospel, and was dying in the full assurance of the Divine

mercy through Christ, and of everlasting life." Then in a fine peroration the Doctor said: "No surrender must be our motto. That was the course pursued by the Apostles, as with dauntless courage they battled with mighty and manifold forms of infidelity—forms of infidelity, which, in several respects, closely resembled those phases of unbelief with which we are now confronted. Fearlessly pushing forward in the conflict, and relying on the arm of Omnipotence, huge systems of error were overturned to their deep foundations. It will be so again if we follow in their footsteps."

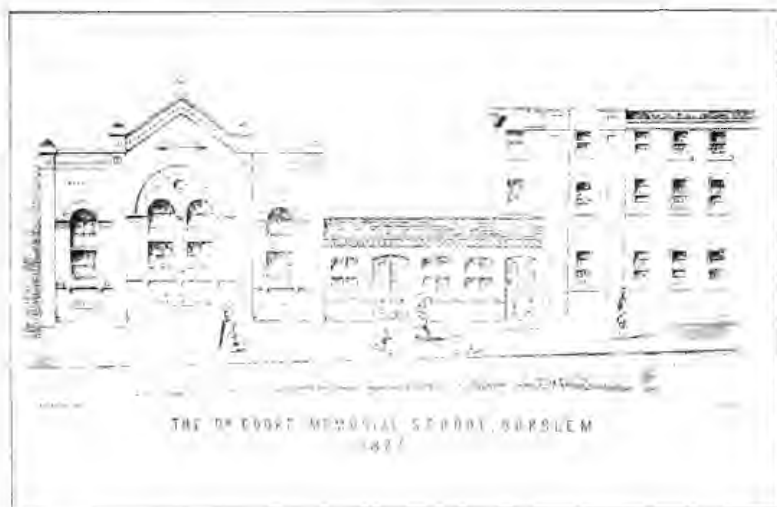
To the above may be added other incidents in Dr. Cooke's life which will be read with interest by the many friends who cherish his name and memory.

He was greatly honoured by the Connexion. Having served in several important Circuits, he was appointed in 1836 Superintendent of the Irish Mission. In 1841 he passed to the office of Mission Secretary. Two years later, when only in the sixteenth year of his ministry, he was elected President of Conference. For twenty-two years he filled the office of Editor of the *Connexional Magazine* and the *Juvenile Instructor*. He was a voluminous writer. "The Deity," "Christian Theology," "The Shekinah," "The Unity, Harmony, and Evidences of Sacred Truth," were among his larger and best known works; while his smaller and less known books included "The Fallacies of the Alleged Antiquity of Man," "The Three Intercessions United," "The Earnest Minister," and booklets and tracts on many subjects. His services were in demand in all parts of the country, and his clear and forceful exposition of truth attracted immense congregations. In 1859 he was elected President for the second time, and again in 1869 for the third time. In 1873 the Connexion acknowledged his great and varied gifts, and the excellent service he had rendered, by the presentation of an illuminated address and a cheque

value £850. His devoted and useful life on earth closed, and his spirit passed into the light and glory of the Father's House on Christmas Day, 1884, in the 79th year of his age.

The building of the school bearing his honoured name proceeded, and when nearing completion five top stones were laid by Mr. T. Cope, Mr. A. B. Corn, Mr. H. Lee, Mr. F. W. Tomkinson, and Mr. John Smith. It was opened in 1878.

The large room measures 12 yards by $19\frac{1}{2}$ yards, and provides accommodation for 500 scholars. It is connected to



the old schools by a covered arcade parallel with the street. The facade is of red pressed bricks relieved by white brick pilasters divided into three bays, and surmounted by an ornamental cornice. The centre bay has a large, double light, circle head window, with stone perforated spandils, and polished granite shaft, with carved capital and moulded base. The two side bays are furnished with single circle head windows. There are also three side windows, and a

large three light window at the back over the rostrum. Then there is a large centre roof lantern, presented by Mr. Henry George Ball which cost £40. The roof is partly open, the principals being of the Queen post style, stained and varnished, and ornamented by brackets, pendants and blocks. The walls are relieved by recesses and plaster angle cornices. A commodious and useful vestry is at the platform end of the room¹. The total cost was £1,350. Towards that amount £1,200 was raised by Bazaar, Subscriptions, Stone laying and Opening Service, and the Trustees gave the balance of £150. We are told that it was the first modern school in the town, and others were stimulated to follow the example set.



¹ Shaw's History and M.M.C. Magazine.

CHAPTER XI.

The Sunday School in the New Premises.

THE School now took possession of the new building, Mr. J. P. Guy and Mr. John Smith being the first superintendents. Teachers and officers devoted themselves with much energy to their work, following largely on the old lines, but with improvements here and there. The acoustic properties of the room were not perfect, and some difficulty was experienced in that direction. A committee therefore was appointed, consisting of Messrs. J. Watkin, W. Mellor, R. Mellor, J. P. Guy, J. Meir, J. Bowden, J. Smith and one of the Secretaries, to consider the matter and report. The report was submitted to the next meeting, and it was decided to consult Mr. Scrivener, Architect, as to what should be done. At a subsequent meeting a resolution was passed to secure the professional advice of Mr. Inskip. What the advice was is not recorded, but the defect seems to have been remedied, for no further reference is made to the matter, and no special difficulty is experienced now in speaking or hearing.

The Class room at the end of the building was appropriated to the use of the young women, and Mr. Guy, at his own expense, upholstered and furnished it. An opening tea was given by Mrs. Guy, which was attended by about fifty members of the Class and friends. After tea the chair was taken by Mr. C. R. Hopkinson, a teacher of thirty years

standing, and addresses were given by Rev. J. Coultas, Messrs. Guy, Bowden, and Baines. The Class room was termed a model of its kind.

Teachers were awarded prizes in those days for regular and punctual attendance. They were given to those who had attended ninety times, morning and afternoon, during the year, and also to those whose duties only required them in



MR. J. MORREY,
Sunday School Superintendent.

the afternoon, who had attended forty-five times. Mr. Guy, as one of the Superintendents, also offered an additional prize to the teacher who had made the greatest number of attendances. That was a system scarcely to be commended. Higher motives than those of prize winning should actuate "the servant of Jesus Christ," whose work is spiritual, and has to do with eternal destinies. Happily the system is now abolished.



MR. H. J. BAINES,
Sunday School Superintendent and Circuit Treasurer Steward.

It is pleasing to note that the monthly prayer meeting at the close of the afternoon school was then an institution, and teachers and officers sought to refresh and strengthen themselves in holy fellowship with God, and the scholars were encouraged to remain to seek the blessing of personal salvation.

The Star Card system of registration was introduced in 1894, and has answered well, the results showing an improvement both in attendance and punctuality.

Bethel School has always been noted for its interest in the spread of the Gospel and the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. Its hand has never been withheld when funds have been needed for that object. We find a resolution of the Teachers' Meeting, inviting Rev. T. Scowby to give a lecture on the 30th November, 1863, when a collec-

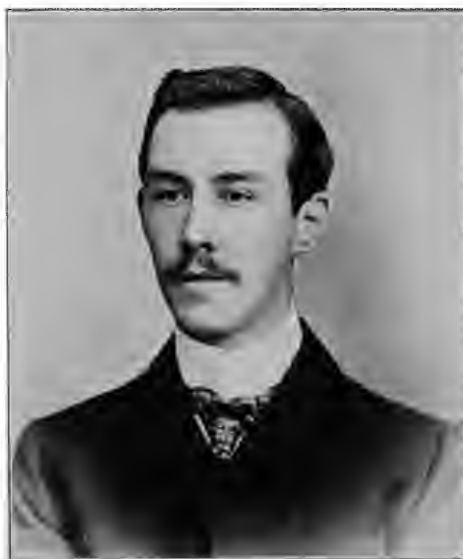
tion was to be made towards the building of our first chapel in Australia, and our mission in China, from its commencement, has received the heartiest and most generous support. For a number of years a children's sale of work was held for that object. To Miss Baines belongs the honour of suggesting the idea, and carrying it into effect. An account of its origin and work, supplied by Miss Baines, will be read with interest and pleasure,

"During the ministry of Rev. D. Brearley, one of the friends greatly interested in mission work thought that some money might be raised by means of a small Children's Bazaar. At that time this was a novelty. The willing help of two or three Sunday scholars was obtained, and in the private schoolroom of the friend named the Bazaar took place. The sum of thirty shillings was realized, and the little effort was much enjoyed.



MR. E. TUSHINGHAM,
Sunday School Treasurer.

The next year an advance was made, the Bazaar being held in the middle schoolroom. The late Mr. Smith, of Waterloo Road, consented to open it, and gave the young promoters five shillings. At this Sale a refreshment stall was provided, presided over by Mrs. Meir and Mrs. Guy. Many of the friends stayed to tea, and afterwards a Juvenile Concert was given in the Dr. Cooke Memorial School. The Chairman was Master (now Rev.) J. E. Meir, and splendidly he performed his duties. The proceeds of the day amounted to £20.



MR. A. P. HOUSTON,
Sunday School Secretary.

For some years the Bazaar continued a strictly children's effort, and as long as it remained such, Mr. Smith opened it each year, kindly increasing his donation to ten shillings. The children who worked so cheerfully year by year were Pattie Meir, Jennie and Sallie Bowden, Emily Guy, Annie Mellor, Susie and Flossie Brookes and Dottie Watkin.

Many Sunday scholars whose names cannot be remembered willingly assisted in the concerts.

After a time the character of the Bazaar was somewhat altered, the elder scholars and teachers managing it, with Mrs. Robinson as secretary; and eventually it was merged into what is now the Annual Sale of Work, but each year a certain proportion of the money raised is set aside for the Foreign Missions."

The Juvenile Concert was a great feature of the effort, and continued with unabated interest for a number of years.



MR. F. M. BARNETT,
Secretary of Sunday school.

We give a copy of one of its earliest programmes. The friends will be pleased to have it in this permanent form, as a memento of youthful activity in a noble cause. It has at least, the merit of quantity, and was no doubt equal in quality. There are thirty-seven items, including three dialogues, apart from the prayer and benediction, and allowing an average of five minutes for each item the programme would extend three hours and five minutes. And all that after the Sale of work.

JUVENILE CONCERT

On TUESDAY, April the 4th, 1882.

MASTER WALTER BERRINGTON WILL PRESIDE.

PROGRAMME.

Opening Hymn	.. .. .	Choir
Chairman's Address	.. .. .	Master W. Berrington
Song ..	"Welcome the Spring Time"	Choir
Recitation	.. .. .	Master R. Guy
Duet, Pianoforte	"Osborne Quadrilles"	Misses Meir and Sant
Recitation	"The Three Questions"	Master H. Taylor
Song ..	.. .. .	Miss A. Mellor
Recitation	.. .. .	Miss Flossie Brooks
Song	.. .. .	Miss E. J. M. Guy
Recitation	"Which Loves Best"	Miss Annie Forrester
Solo, Violin	.. .. .	Master A. Corns
Recitation	"Home for the Holidays"	Master J. Mellor
Duet	"I know a Bank"	.. .. . Misses Steele
Dialogue	.. .. .	.. .. . 9 Boys
Song ..	"Who'll buy my Pretty Flowers"	Miss Sanders
Recitation ..	"The May Queen"	Miss Hawthorne
Pianoforte Solo	"The Ash Grove"	Miss Bowden
Recitation ..	"One little Kitten"	Master J. Goodwin
Song	.. .. .	Choir
Duet, Violin	.. .. .	Miss and Master Hooley
Recitation	"New Year's Eve"	.. .. . Miss Chorley
Song ..	"Robin Adair"	.. .. . Miss Annie Dunning
Reading	.. .. .	.. .. . Master Eddie Meir
Duet	"Very Suspicious"	Miss Wyon & Master Forrester
Pianoforte Duet	.. .. .	Misses Hooley
Recitation	"The Doll's Tea Party"	.. .. . Miss Brooks
Song ..	"The Snow Man"	.. .. . Miss F. Meir
Dialogue	"Happiness"	Misses Wynne and Dunn and Master Kennerley
Pianoforte Duet	"The Pretty Birds"	Misses Corns and Sant
Recitation	"The Little Old Women"	.. .. . Miss Lawton
Recitation	"Eyes and Nose"	Master E. Barnett
Song	.. .. .	Master Povey
Recitation	"Those Beautiful Bells"	.. .. .
Dialogue	"Better than Gold"	Miss A. Mellor
Duet	"A Hole in the Carpet"	Miss and Master Meir
Recitation ..	"List to the Convent Bells"	.. .. . Misses Steele
Song	"The Stage Struck Hero"	Master J. Dunn
	"Jolly Little Clacker"	Choir



MR. JOHN DOWNS,
Recent Secretary of the Sunday School.

About this time another minister was given to the Connexion in the person of William Oakes Meir.

Mr. Meir was born on the 7th May, 1859, in a house which stands almost under the shadow of the ancient parish church of Burslem, where for nearly two generations his family had their home. He remembers the day when he was first taken to the Sunday School, and can recall the face and figure of the Superintendent, Mr. William Tomkinson. Among those who taught him were Messrs. Henry Barnett, John Herbert, Henry Baines and James Jervis. Rev. J. C. Watts came to the Circuit when he was a boy of eight years, and his winsomeness and vivacity captivated his young heart. His first definite religious impressions date from the time of that ministry, and that of Rev. J. Robinson, now a missionary in China. Writing of his conversion, Mr. Meir says:—"Somewhere about the age of sixteen I became

a teacher in the Sunday School, and twelve months later came the crisis of my life. It was on the evening of Sunday, August 20th, 1876. Rev. Daniel Brearley, the new Superintendent, had conducted the service, and during the prayer meeting which followed I felt that Jesus Christ came nearer to me than He had ever come before. Tenderly, and yet with almost irresistible drawings, He drew me to Himself. It was the highest and most solemn moment of my life. It was one



REV. WILLIAM OAKES MEIR.

of those times which *'crowded eternity into an hour'* Only for a little while did the silent never-to-be-forgotten struggle go on, for presently I rose from my knees, opened the pew door, and walked up to the communion rail. It was an outward sign of the absolute surrender of the soul. Hereafter, peace stole into my heart, slowly, and with inexpressible sweetness, like the tranquility which comes to the long storm-tossed sea. At the close of the meeting some of my friends adjourned to

the minister's vestry, and there waited before God, my mother all the while kneeling and praying by my side. That night I knew I was a child of God." On the following Wednesday evening he was enrolled as a member of Mr. Guy's class, and soon began to take part in the public prayer meeting, cottage services, and open-air work. For about seven years he was Secretary of the Mutual Improvement Society. In December, 1878, he preached his first sermon in the old chapel at Cobridge. Two months later he was placed on the plan, and at the April Quarterly Meeting, 1880, he was received as a fully accredited local preacher. In 1883, "after many inward conflicts and much praying for light," he definitely resolved to obey the call of his own heart and the church, and offer himself for the work of the ministry. In 1884 he became a student in Ranmoor College, and two years later passed into the work for which he had been trained. He has laboured in the following circuits, viz :—Manchester North, Halifax North, Loughborough, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Crewe, Huddersfield, London (Packington Street). Stafford, Macclesfield, and Middlesborough.

In 1888 his brother, John Edwin Meir, also entered Ranmoor College to take his training for the ministry. He was born September 17th, 1867. He gave himself to Christ when between thirteen and fourteen years of age, under the influence of a powerful sermon, preached in Endon Wesleyan Chapel by Rev. Edward Smith, who at that time was the evangelist of the Macclesfield District. He became deeply interested in the work of the school and the church, and for several years served in the office of Sunday School Secretary. He also succeeded his brother as Secretary of the Mutual Improvement Society. His first sermon was preached at Zion, Dalehall, May 30th, 1886, and shortly after he came on the circuit plan as a local preacher on trial, and having

commended himself to the churches, was in due course passed on to "full plan." His preaching grew in acceptance, and his labours were owned of God. Then the call came to a wider sphere. He obeyed, and after his training at Rammoor, was received as a minister on probation and sent to Halifax West Circuit in 1900. His next appointments



REV. J. E. MEIR

were Dewsbury, Bangor (Ireland), Manchester South, and Ashton. Happy is the mother who has such sons.

The following is the roll of godly men who have served the school in the offices of Superintendent, Treasurer, and Secretary since 1858. That is the earliest date from which we have a consecutive record. "Part remain unto this present—some are fallen asleep."

SUPERINTENDENTS.		TREASURERS.		SECRETARIES.	
	Yrs.		Yrs.		Yrs.
Wm. Tomkinson	11	Alfred Boulton	15	Joseph Meir	15
Samuel Wood	3	Joseph Meir	19	T. Furnival	2
John Watkin	3	Alfred H. Boulton	1	H. Weatherby	16
Wm. Mellor	12	Robert Mellor	3	James Watkin	6
Samuel Hall	3	Ed. Tushingham	8	E. Rigby	2
George Hill	3	(Now in office.)		H. J. Baines	4
John Smith	10			Alfred P. Swann	2
James Morrey	3			John E. Meir	6
J. P. Guy	7			Ed. Tushingham	2
G. Ansterbury	1			Joseph Stevenson	9
F. Malkin	12			Enoch Dunning	5
Robert Mellor	8			Henry Jackson	6
James Bowden	4			John Downs	7
John Morrey	9			Percy Hobson	4
(Now in office.)				(Now in office.)	
H. J. Baines	7			F. M. Barnett	1
(Now in office.)				(Now in office.)	

The number of officers, and the years they served may perplex some of our readers unless we explain. There have always been two superintendents, and since 1865 two secretaries. For two or three years there were four superintendents, one for morning, and another for afternoon, in the boys' room, and the same in the girls room; also four secretaries. One treasurer has always sufficed.

Officers and Teachers for the present year, from March, 1903, to March, 1904.

OFFICERS.

Superintendents, J. Morrey and H. J. Baines.

Treasurer, E. Tushingham.

Secretaries, A. P. Hobson and F. M. Barnett.

Conductors, Scott Felton, R. Davenport, E. Wright, John Downs, and D. Eardley.

Clothing Fund Treasurer, E. J. Barnett.

Clothing Fund Secretaries, John P. Mellor and Wm. Mountford.

Star Card Secretary, Wm. Baines.

Collector, Wm. Goodwin.



MR. E. WRIGHT. MR. D. EARDLEY.
MR. SCOTT FELTON. MR. J. DAVENTRY.
Conductors of the Sunday School.

TEACHERS.

R. H. Walton, A. Johnson, W. E. Robinson, J. Beeston (entered into rest), H. T. Barnett, E. J. Barnett, F. W. Beeston, W. Mountford, E. Hobson, C. Gardiner, A. J. Stanway, and S. Townley.

W. Mellor and A. H. Boulton, supplementary.

Miss Baines, Miss Findler, Mrs. E. Dunning, Miss E. Barnett, Miss S. J. Barnett, Miss F. Barnett, Miss Guy, Miss Bishop, Miss M. Robinson, Miss S. Morrey, Miss Boulton, Miss M. Walker, Miss L. Walker, Mrs. Wright, Miss Davison, Miss Boughey, Miss G. Boughey, Miss Sargeant, Miss Powis, Miss Townley, Miss Wattison, Miss M. Boulton, Miss Shorthouse, Miss Rogerson, Miss Beeston, Miss Ryles, Miss F. M. Boulton and Miss Lawton.

RETURNS—Members, 152; probationers, 6; officers and teachers, 50; scholars, 556.

The Centenary Celebrations included a Grand Bazaar for the renovation and improvement of the entire estate. It was held in the Dr. Cooke Memorial School on the 28th, 29th and 30th of October, 1903. On the first day the Bazaar was opened by Councillor J. W. Meldrum, of Altrincham, the Mayor of Burslem (Councillor W. Lovatt) presiding. On the second day by Councillor S. Johnson, under the presidency of Mr. T. I. Ford. On the third day the ceremony was performed by the following children, viz:—The Misses Clarice Evelyn Young, Doris Boulton, Doris Tushingham, Dorothy Baines, Alice Shipley, Annie Gardiner, Lily Thomas, Nellie Stanway, Florence Johnson, Nellie Leigh, Lily Proudlove, Mabel Middlebrook. Masters Willie Robinson, Arthur Ryles, Harry Ford, John Arthur Hughes, Frank Roberts, Ernest Cumberlidge, Bertie Swann, Boyce Berrington, Robert Reginald Barlow. The friends entered with great heartiness into the effort, and never was a Bazaar characterised by more harmony and kindly feeling. The amount raised was £450, net.

A gloom was cast over the close of the Bazaar by the sudden death of one of the workers, Mrs. R. Powis, who was taken ill on her way home, and died in a few moments of syncope. She was greatly respected, and much sympathy was expressed for the sorrowing family.

The history of Bethel, both Church and Sunday School, is one of which we need not be ashamed. It has had a long succession of noble men and women, who did a grand work for God, and they have left us a heritage of which we may well be proud. We have entered into their labours. It is for us to carry forward the work which they began and sustained amid many difficulties. God is with us, as He was with them. The future is as bright as the past, and full of glorious promise. There are as good men and women in the church to-day as there ever was ; and the school never had a more intelligent and loyal band of teachers and officers. The number of scholars on the books, and the average attendance were never higher. Our watchword must be *forward*. The goal of to-day must be the starting point of to-morrow. There is much to be done ; and, as the success of the past was achieved, under the blessing of God, by fidelity, self-sacrifice, and whole hearted labour, so the success of the future will be secured by the same spirit of sacrifice and service. The power of a church lies in the personal consecration of its members, and the influence of a Sunday School in the faithfulness and devotion of its teachers and officers. May these qualities abound more and more in dear old Bethel.

“ Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store ;
Take myself, and I will be,
Ever, only, *all* for Thee.”



CHAPTER XII.

Providence, Cobridge.

OUR church at Cobridge, was commenced in a cottage at Sneyd Green, near to the place where the Wesleyan Chapel now stands, in 1806. On the earliest Circuit Plan to which we have had access (1818), Sneyd Green appears as a preaching place. Services were held at two o'clock in the afternoon, and at six in the evening, until 1823, when a morning service was added. This, however, continued only for one quarter.

It was impossible to do much in a place so small and cramped, the people, therefore, determined to arise and build. They were evidently men of sagacity and judgment, and could see that Cobridge was likely to afford more scope for aggressive Christian work, and in their wisdom they secured the present excellent and commanding site, and built their first chapel in 1822. Cobridge appeared on the plan August 24th, 1823, when Mr. Job Mear was appointed in the morning, and Mr John Ridgway in the evening. But Sneyd Green still remained on the plan, with one service—in the afternoon, until February 15th, 1824. It was then discontinued until October, 1825, when it re-appeared with a week-night appointment on every alternate Thursday. In 1836 it finally ceased. Providence Chapel had now entirely absorbed Sneyd Green. Three services were held on the Sunday, from July 22nd, 1824, to September 3rd, 1826. Then the morning service was dropped, but after a while was resumed, and the afternoon discontinued.



PROVIDENCE CHAPEL AND SCHOOL, COBRIDGE.

The church continued to grow, doing excellent work in the new district for sixty-two years, when it was found necessary again to extend their borders, and, in 1884, the present large chapel, with schoolroom underneath, was built.

In 1893, Rev. J. Medcraft, who had retired from full circuit work, took charge of the church, and for seven years remained its faithful pastor, greatly beloved. He passed away October 15th, 1900. Mr. S. J. Opie succeeded Mr. Medcraft, and was successful in gathering the young people, and giving a new impulse to the life of the church, which has continued with increasing fervour. Mr. H. Pritchard followed, and, at the end of the year, was admitted

as a student into Ranmoor College, Sheffield. Rev. J. A. Hughes, who had rendered three years' good service at Ballyclare, Ireland, under the Connexional Missionary Committee, then accepted the pastorate, and the church was never more prosperous than at present. There is a good class meeting, well attended, and conducted on old Methodist lines, by Mr. George Harrison. Also, a vigorous Christian Endeavour Society, in which a large number of young people meet week by week. This year, 1903, the entire estate has been renovated, and put in good repair, and a new organ, which had been the dream of years, has been placed in the chapel at a cost of £255. It was formally opened, March 8th, by Mr. John Cooper, who was presented with a silver key, suitably inscribed; and a grand recital was given by Mr. Harold Malkin, F.R.C.O. On the following Sunday special services were conducted by Rev. M. J. Birks,



REV. J. A. HUGHES.

President of Conference, and large and appreciative congregations assembled, both morning and evening. The total cost of the organ and renovation amounted to £400, all of which was raised. It was a splendid effort, and did great credit to the large heartedness and generosity of the friends.

The Sunday School is in excellent condition, well officered, and well conducted. Most of the teachers, and many of the elder scholars, are members of the Christian Endeavour. The outlook for Providence Chapel is good in every department. May her bow abide in strength.

The last trust was formed in 1894, during the ministry of Rev. W. F. Newsam, and was composed as follows :—John Medcraft, Joseph Furber, Henry Mould, John Cooper, John W. Harrison, Joseph Harrison, Thomas Taylor, Enoch Nixon, Thomas Kirkham, Arthur Poole, Frederick Bennett, William Bloore, and Joseph P. Guy.

OFFICERS.

Trust Treasurer, John W. Harrison ; *Secretary*, William Bloore ; *Pew Steward*, Joseph Harrison.

Church Treasurer, John W. Harrison ; *Secretary*, W. Tuincliffe ; *Offertory Stewards*, T. Kirkham, S. J. Opie, and A. J. Cooper ; *Organist*, W. H. Boote.

Sunday School Superintendents, John Cooper and Thomas Kirkham ; *Treasurer*, Joseph Harrison ; *Secretary*, T. S. Whitfield.

Returns : Members, 91 ; Probationers, 35 ; Teachers, 56 ; Scholars, 380.

We are given to understand that the friends contemplate issuing a souvenir at the centenary of this church—1906. Hence the brevity of the above sketch.

CHAPTER XIII.

Tunstall.

THE history of the Methodist New Connexion in Tunstall is interesting from the standpoint of its origin, the type of men it has produced, and the growth and advancement of the cause, especially during the first twenty or thirty years of its existence, notwithstanding the struggles of its early days. Since then, while the conditions of development have not been so favourable as were hoped for, the church has consolidated and grown in influence and power, and for many years has been a great moral and spiritual force in the town. It has always been blessed with strong men—men of intellect, of sound judgment and sterling integrity, who have taken their share in public and civic life, and won the respect and confidence of their fellow townsmen.

The history runs back into the early twenties of the last century. Matthew Ashworth and Ann, his wife, were the two first members. A class meeting was commenced, and a church formed in the house of William Evans, 13, Williamson Street. The place appeared on the circuit plan, December 3rd, 1821, with a Sunday Evening Service only, the first preacher appointed being Thomas Heath, of Newcastle, the father of Rev. David Heath and of Alderman T. P. Heath, J.P. The Sunday School assembled in the open air, in a timber yard belonging to Thomas Walker, of Walker Street, Brownhills, and when the weather was unfavourable they

were admitted to the joiners' shop. The same hospitable shelter was also extended to the church, which had outgrown the accommodation afforded by the cottage, and here the infant cause, nurtured by fervent prayer and simple faith in



TUNSTALL OLD CHAPEL.

God, grew in vitality and strength, and increased in numbers and power until that place also became too strait for them. Mr. John Ridgway then secured an eligible site on an old estate formerly know as "Stoney Croft," now the Market

Square, for the sum of £108 10s., the vendor being William Sneyd, of Keele. The Deed of Conveyance is dated 20th September, 1823. On that site the first chapel, Mount Tabor, was built, and great was the joy when the Superintendent of the Sunday School, William Hargreave, with half-a-dozen teachers and thirty scholars marched in procession from the joiners' shop to the new chapel. Our aged and respected friend, Mrs. Ann Harrison, was one of the scholars and walked in the procession. Among the early pioneers of the cause were Matthew and Ann Ashworth (referred to above), Benjamin Goodwin, James Lowe, William Hargreave, Bessie Walker, and Sally Lowe.

The principles of the "New Itinerancy" commended themselves to the public mind, and the church and Sunday School grew apace, necessitating the enlargement of the chapel, and the placing of galleries at both sides and the end. The body was left without pews for the accommodation of the school.

Under those improved conditions things continued to advance, until the Barkerite disruption. Then came a great crisis in the history of our Denomination, not only at Tunstall, but in other parts of the country. Joseph Barker had been a minister with us, but was expelled after a trial extending over several days at the Halifax Conference in 1841, on account of his unsound and unscriptural teaching. Many churches had been disturbed by his heresies, and the returns for the year following his dismissal showed that the Connexion had lost twenty-nine societies and 4,348 members, while several chapels had been wrested from us.

Terrible havoc was wrought in our Tunstall church. The following account from the facile pen of Mr. Charles Shaw, the author of that fascinating book, "*When I was a child*," will be read with interest by his many friends.

"The first recollection I have of Joseph Barker, the first knowledge I ever gained of the man or his movement, came through hearing him preach in a street in Tunstall one Sunday night. I should think it would be in June, or early in July, for the days were then long and hot. I cannot be certain whether this incident occurred in 1841 or 1842. If in the former year it must have been soon after Barker's expulsion. Nor would this be surprising, for the Potteries afforded good grounds for the onslaughts upon the church which he was then eager to make.

"What I remember is that I saw a minister standing on a chair in the street, surrounded by a large number of people. I did not know anything about his recent expulsion, so I was only attracted by the man's appearance, his manner of speech, and the way in which he was listened to by the people. I remember being impressed by his manly figure. He was then about thirty-seven years of age. He carried a shining amiability on his face, and this, combined with his bland and persuasive delivery, gave strong interest to what he said. I have spoken of his blandness, and I saw later in his life, what I had a glimpse of in my early youth, that there was an element of plausibility in this blandness which gave him an easy capture of the unwary. I believe that most of those who followed him were drawn away by his plausibilities, not by their convictions. If I may say so here, Joseph Barker never had a strong hold on the minds of his followers, neither as a Christian teacher or infidel lecturer, as socialist or anti-socialist, or even as a temperance advocate. He was gripped by no convictions of his own, and so he never gripped any loyal body of followers. He could scatter 'silly sheep,' yet he was no wolf, neither had he an element of the shepherd in his nature. He was an incarnation of waywardness, eccentricity and recklessness, which may be mercifully explained behind the veil.

"After that Sunday evening service I have referred to, three cottages were soon built in the street near which Barker preached. These cottages remained mere shells, and so formed a Sunday School and preaching room. When I joined our own Sunday School in Tunstall in 1842, 'The Barkerite School,' as it was then called, was in full vigour.



MR. GEORGE KIRKHAM.

"It was worked mainly by one family, consisting of a father and three sons. They were determined, energetic men. One of them was a good musician, and the father was a man who had an air of gravity and responsibility which gave

him some social influence. It always seemed to me, however, that the sons had been carried away by Barker, and not the father. I am certain of this, that the loss of such a family to our church and Sunday School at Tunstall, was a serious blow. George Kirkham, then under thirty years of age, was the only real leader of the Cause left. He was aided by such men as George Evans, Samuel Wainwright, Joseph Alcock, and William Evans, but all except the latter were young men like himself. There was Richard Burgess too, a small manufacturer, but the only part he took was in teaching writing in the Sunday School. This he did with splendid ability as a penman, and with a fidelity which was most admirable considering the poor material with which he had to deal.

"From that time up to the time of his death, George Kirkham's influence in devotion and character was seen in the growth and consolidation of both the church and the school. He gave them a compactness and centred interest which enabled them to withstand the shock occasioned by his sudden death. But for him I believe our church and school in Tunstall would have been wiped out, and if I may be allowed to say so, he gave a grace and loyalty to one youthful Sunday scholar, whose fidelity and devotion and self-sacrifice blossomed and bore fruit for over sixty years. In my humble judgment, the two main links, under God, in our cause at Tunstall since 1841 to 1901, were my beloved teacher George Kirkham, and my beloved friend, Thomas Ford. There were other devout and simple souls who loyally sustained them, and held up their hands. I should like to mention the names of some of them, but space does not permit. I think I may, however, mention the name of Samuel Wainwright without any invidiousness. He was a quiet, amiable, godly man, of reticent habit, but according to his powers, as devout and earnest a worker as a Church or Sunday School could possess.



MR. THOMAS FORD.

“Shall I not mention too, an aged and beloved friend, Mrs. Harrison, the surviving sister of George Kirkham? She carries hallowed memories in connection with our Tunstall Cause, and by her long service, sweetly and faithfully given for nearly seventy-years, she has made many such memories, and her works will follow her.”



CHAPTER XIV

Tunstall—Continued.

BY the blessing of God on the earnest labours of the loyal and faithful few, the church survived the shock and havoc of the Barkerite split, and again renewed its strength and prosperity. In 1847, the chapel was permanently secured to the Connexion by being placed on the *Model Deed*. On January 29th, 1851, Mr. John Ridgway, following the course he had taken at Bethel, on retiring from the circuit, conveyed the estate to a body of trustees composed of—William Ball, John Machin, Samuel Wainwright, Joseph Alcock, William Evans, John Eardley, Stephen Dooley, Joseph Hawthorne, Peter Barrow, William Weston, James Gregory, and William James.

These were men of grit, courage, and determination, and were loyally supported by a noble band of women—mothers and sisters in Israel, real heroines.

The old chapel had become inadequate, especially for the requirements of the Sunday School. There were nearly 400 scholars on the books, and ampler and more suitable premises must be provided. So they launched a scheme for the building of a new chapel and schools. Among other efforts to raise money was one by the members of the Mutual Improvement Class. It took the form of a monster Tea Meeting, held in a tent, on the farm land of Mr. William Wheeldon, on the other side of Bradwell Wood. The Tea was followed by the performance of Hannah

Moore's sacred drama "David and Goliath." The out-buildings of the farm were cleared and made ready for the visitors, and the tent erected by the members of the class, after long hours of hard work on the Pot Banks. The zealous young men toiled through the long, light summer evenings, until eleven and twelve o'clock at night. The meeting was held on the Tunstall Wakes Tuesday, July, 1849. The weather was glorious. Teachers, scholars, and friends, walked in procession to the field, headed by a banner, whose inscription proclaimed Mount Tabor Sunday School and the date of its institution. Five hundred tickets had been sold, but 800 persons (one chronicler says 1000) attended. Imagine the excitement! Willing hands and feet were busy everywhere; school children were despatched to neighbouring farms for milk; others were sent to springs and wells for water. Farmers lent their carts to fetch more provisions from the town and surrounding villages, and ultimately all were supplied. "David and Goliath" went off splendidly, and £50 was raised. The Wakes suffered greatly, and there was no small stir among the showmen, mountebanks, and others, who were loud in their indignation, when they saw their customers leaving them and going with "Kilham's people" to the wood. After that, challenges passed between the married people and the single, and young and old vied with each other in their efforts to arrange the largest tea meetings, and raise the most money.

The Conference gave a grant of £250 to enable them practically to extinguish the debt on the old place: after which it was sold to Joseph Nield, July 23rd, 1852.

When all outstanding accounts were paid, the trustees found themselves with a balance in hand of £380, with which to commence the new project. Meanwhile, a new site, in Booth's Field, containing 1060 superficial square yards, had been purchased for £320. The conveyance was completed



TUNSTALL CHAPEL.

October 21st, 1851, between Joseph Booth and the trustees. The schools were built first. About this time, a glorious revival broke out, and a goodly number of young men were brought to God. In the ardour of their first love they were ready for any work for Christ and the church.

The foundationstones of the new schools were laid March 1st, 1851. The day was very wet, but a large number of friends assembled. A procession of trustees, teachers, and

members marched from the old chapel, in the Market Square, to the ground. Revs. T. Griffiths, G. Grundy, and G. Hallatt took part in the ceremony, after which tea was provided in the Primitive Methodist Schoolroom, when three hundred and sixty people were served. Mr. J. Dixon presided at the subsequent meeting, and stirring addresses were delivered by the above ministers, with Rev. J. Innocent and Mr. C. Lawton, of Newcastle. The opening services were held on Whit-Sunday, when sermons were preached by Rev. J. White; and on the two following Sundays, the preachers being Rev. J. Innocent, and Rev. J. Howard. Another great tea meeting was also held, the new room being decorated with paper curtains, sprays, and boughs of trees. The weather was warm, and the crowd of people and steaming tea made the place insufferably hot. But they were brave in those days, and neither heat nor cold could frighten them. The meeting continued long, and concluded in candle light, reflected by the lustre of the old-fashioned tin scones.

The young men already referred to, having made themselves famous by their rendering of the sacred drama, were induced to repeat it. Expectation ran high, and the results of the second effort encouraged all concerned.

The school measures 60 by 30 feet. It is of two storeys, and the rooms are said to provide accommodation for eight hundred scholars. The cost of the building was £525.

For five years the public services and meetings were held in the upper schoolroom; but this could not continue, the new chapel must be built. The trustees and friends faced the situation with courage and determination. Plans were prepared by Mr. T. Fairbank, architect, of Bradford, and accepted, and the contract was let to Mr. F. Batty, of Tunstall. The foundation stone was laid by Mr. John

Ridgway, April 27th, 1857. Rev. Samuel Hulme gave the address on our doctrines and polity. Rev Henry Watts, who was then President of Conference, and Superintendent of the Burslem Circuit, conducted the ceremonies, assisted by Rev. T. Rider. Nearly five hundred remained for tea in the schoolroom. Mr. John Ridgway occupied the chair at the meeting in the evening, and addresses were delivered by Revs. John Addyman, J. Stokoe, J. Candelet, T. Cartwright, and Mr. (afterwards Rev.) M. Cotton.

The new chapel was opened on Sunday, December 6th, of the same year, when Rev. S. Hulme preached with his usual eloquence and power in the morning, and Rev. P. J. Wright, afternoon and evening. The opening services were continued on the two following Sundays, conducted by Rev. Henry Piggin, Rev. C. D. Ward, and Rev. Thomas Allin. On the first Sunday evening, the presence of the Holy Spirit was graciously manifested, and, after a powerful sermon on the words : " Whom having not seen, ye love," a young man came out of his pew, and, kneeling at the communion rail, gave himself to God. That was a good beginning.

The chapel measures 71 by 42, and is 33 feet in height. The architecture is classic, being in the form of a Grecian temple, with a triangular pediment across the front, and a recessed portico, with columns and pilasters in the Ionic style. A flight of steps extends from end to end of the colonnade, and the building is entered by a large door, fifteen feet in height, by seven in width. The ceiling is elliptical, divided into panels by curved and horizontal ribs, and surrounded by a bold classic cornice. The windows are of circular heads, with architraves, and imposts. The ministers' vestry is at the rear, and the orchestra is separated from the main building by pilasters, and an ornamental elliptical arch. It was considered a very handsome structure.

The entire cost was £1,400, towards which the following sums were raised :—To previous tea meetings, and special services, £110 ; tea meeting at the stone laying, £21 ; collections at the opening services, £72 ; subscriptions, Joseph Alcock, £25 ; John Ridgway, £20 ; Joseph Love (of Durham), £20 ; a friend, £10 ; William Brownfield, £10 ; Job Meigh, £10 ; Thomas Peake, £10 ; sums under ten pounds, £192. Total, £500. The cost of the entire estate, including the land, is stated to have been £2,700.

The school was duly registered as a place of Divine Worship, on February 27th, 1854, at which time services were being held in that building. The chapel was registered for the same purpose, on December 21st, 1860, and further registered, for the solemnization of marriages, on November 10th, 1873.

The present organ was placed in the chapel in 1870. It was built by Messrs. Bellamy and Stringer, of Hanley, and cost £200. A further sum of £50 was spent in structural adaptation. The opening services were conducted by Rev. J. Medcraft, and Mr. Thomas Hulme (of Porthill), presided at the organ. Mr. Joseph Wainwright filled the position of hon. organist for several years, until 1880, when Mr Walter Cumberlidge was appointed, and has filled the office with great efficiency to the present time.

Two new trusts have been formed since the original: one on the 28th October, 1869, when Rev. J. C. Watts was the Superintendent of the Circuit. It consisted of Joseph Alcock, Thomas Ford, William Kemp, George Latham, John Mellor, R. Hilditch, George Copeland, Stephen Dooley, John Machin, William Astbury, George Moston, John Lunt, William Mandley, John Hobson, Abraham Baggalley, William Capey, Jr., Thomas E. Wootton, William Acton, William Goldstraw, William Booth, Isaac Dobson, John Eardley.

The last appointment was made on the 16th January, 1890, during the ministry of Rev. T. Stoneley, and the following were the names :—Walter R. Berrington, William Booth, James Barlow, John Bradley, George Copeland, William Capey, Senr., William Capey, Jr., George Capey, Walter Cumberlidge, Edwin H. Eardley, Thomas Ford, Thomas I. Ford, Samson H. Ford, Thomas Gregory, R. Hilditch, William Lindop, Joseph Meir, Joseph Middlebrook, John Mellor, David Reid, Frederick Scott, William Vernon, Thomas E. Wootton, William Willatt, Arthur J. Capey, John Moody, William H. Moston, Isaac Dobson, William Dobson, Albert Dobson. It will be noted that several of these were in the previous trust.

The heavy debt on the estate created a burden for many years, but right nobly did the friends struggle with it, and again and again it was reduced, the final effort for its extinction being made in 1899, when Mr. Thomas Ford and Sons



MR. WILLIAM CAPEY.

headed the subscription list with £100, and other friends gave well, and worked splendidly for the Bazaar, which was held December 6th, 7th, and 8th. The net result of the whole effort amounted to £659 16s. 5d., and thus the debt was removed except £200, which is balanced by two cottages.

The close connection of Mr. Thomas Ford with every department of the church has already been referred to. His constancy and fidelity, and his warm and generous sympathy for every deserving object endeared him to all. To the end of his life his heart dwelt with his poorer brethren, and his final gift was a legacy of £200, to be invested, and the interest annually distributed among the needy of the church and congregation. Thus the fragrance of his useful and honoured life will be preserved, and many yet unborn will rise to bless his memory.

A scheme is now being mooted which, if accepted, will mark a new epoch in the history of our cause in Tunstall.



REV. FRANK RHODES.

The neighbourhood of our present chapel and school has become largely occupied by potteries, and many of the people are drifting into more pleasant parts of the town. The suggestion is that we should build modern premises in a more promising district. Most generous offers have been made, and we earnestly hope that the scheme may develop into the realization of our brightest dreams.

The church is doing fairly well, though the circumstances referred to are not favourable to large developments. Rev. Frank Rhodes is working most zealously. The Sunday School is in a prosperous condition, with Mr. T. I. Ford as superintendent. Mr. David Reid, a brother of exceptional abilities and greatly respected, not only by our own people, but by the town at large, has a fine class of young men; the general attendance of teachers and scholars is good, and a spirit of hopefulness prevails.

OFFICERS.

Trust Treasurer, W. R. Berrington; *Secretary*, W. C. Willott;
Pew Stewards, A. J. Capey and J. Meir.

Church Treasurer, J. Barlow; *Secretary*, T. I. Ford; *Offertory Stewards*, W. Hall and M. Hall; *Organist*, W. Cumberlidge; *Choir Master*, C. Machin.

Sunday School Superintendents, T. I. Ford and J. Meir;
Treasurer, W. R. Berrington; *Secretaries*, W. H. Moston, W. Hall, D. W. Reid, E. Barlow.

RETURNS:—Members, 78; Probationers, 15; Teachers, 46;
Scholars, 320.



CHAPTER XV

Dalehall—Zion.

IT is probable that our Cause at Dalehall (formerly called Dale-hole) had its origin in the Class Meeting, which was held at "Longport, a village near Burslem," to which William Ford was appointed assistant leader, about the year 1816. Nothing definite is known until June, 1825, when Dalehall appeared on the plan, the last of a long list of places which then formed the great Hanley Circuit. Revs. J. Jackson, W. Chapman, and Andrew Lynn were the ministers, and William Cooke (afterwards Dr.), was in his first quarter as a local preacher on trial, having served the previous quarter as an exhorter. He was planned at Dalehall in the afternoon of August 21st, 1825. That was the only service in the day at that time, but after a while an evening service was added, and subsequently one on the week night.

Whether the Church met in a hired room we do not know, but they would hardly be content with a cottage for fifteen years.

On the plan, dated Nov., 1840, to Jan., 1841, a notice appears that the new chapel, at Dalehall, would be opened on the 1st of November. Rev. P. J. Wright was the preacher, taking for his text, Luke x., 2. "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest." The Chapel was built on the same site as the present, but stood back a yard or two, and had palisades

in front. Some of the old friends remember that. The Sunday School was built twelve years later, the foundation stone being laid on May 17th, 1853, by Mr. Joseph Love, of Durham. At two o'clock the friends formed a procession, and walked through the streets, returning to the site of the proposed school at three, when the Stone-Laying



ZION CHAPEL AND SCHOOL, DALEHALL.

Ceremonies commenced. Mr. Love was presented with a handsome china trowel, mounted in silver, with a glass handle. It was made by Messrs. Alcock and Co., and was considered a very fine specimen of china work. Rev. William Mills gave the official address, and Rev. W. Pacey, Superintendent of the Burslem Circuit, and Rev. G. Wood

took part in the proceedings. The Tea Meeting was held in Bethel Schoolroom, and Mr. Benjamin Fowler, of Liverpool, presided in the evening, when addresses were delivered by Revs. S. B. Schofield (Congregationalist), W. Pacey, G. Hallatt, G. Wood, Messrs. Joseph Love, B. Cork, J. Edge, and J. Watkin. Mr. Love gave a subscription of £10, and intimated that if they could see a good prospect of placing the building out of debt, he would send them another £10. The School was opened on Sunday, October 16th, of the same year. The Afternoon Service was held in the Congregational Chapel, Burslem, and in the evening in our own place, at Dalehall, Rev. T. Boycott being the preacher. On the following Sunday, Rev. S. Barton conducted the services, which were held—afternoon, in the Wesleyan Chapel, Burslem; evening, in Bethel. The building measures 44 × 21 feet and has two storeys. The cost was £300, of which £160 was raised by subscriptions and collections.

The Chapel was re-built in 1867. In 1874 the organ was purchased, and opened on July 14th by Mr T. Hulme, with special singing and much rejoicing.

An effort is now being made to reduce the heavy debt of £700 on the estate by £400. The Conference has generously promised a grant of £50 from the Chapel Fund, if £350 can be raised locally. By means of a Sale of Work in February, 1903, £112 was secured towards that object, and the mortgagee has accepted £100 of the debt. It is hoped to raise the balance in a year or so, and thus relieve the financial strain. The Church possesses an earnest band of working men and women who toil with great devotion, and seem never to grow weary in well-doing. Both rooms of the School are crowded with scholars, and two large adult classes have to meet in the Chapel and the Minister's Vestry. We should like to see new and up-to-date premises in that

thickly-populated district. No people are more deserving of help.

The Jubilee of the present School building was celebrated on Sunday and Monday, October 2nd and 26th. On the Sunday morning Mr. H. J. Baines distributed the annual prizes to the scholars. Rev. John Young conducted



MR. SAMUEL BRATT.

the services afternoon and evening. The children were on the stage and sang suitable hymns. On the Monday a re-union of old scholars took place. A large number sat down to a substantial tea. The Mayor of Burslem, Councillor W. Lovatt presided at the meeting in the Chapel. Rev. John Young gave a hearty welcome to the old scholars, and invited all who lived in the neighbourhood to return to their old home. Letters were read from former scholars in America, Wales and Scotland. The meeting was afterwards addressed by Councillor George Bennett, Messrs. S. Bratt,

Isaac Mountford, Robert Hill, John D. Kirkham, William Allmark, S. Gater, Reuben Berrisford. Delightful reminiscences were given by the speakers, and all bore testimony to the excellent work the School had accomplished. Interesting and touching references were made to many of the former workers, including John Gater, Isaac Locker, Anthony Slater, Henry Mitchell, Hamlet Griffiths, James Curson, John Broadhurst, Edward King, Thomas Gater, Robert Kilgour, Hamlet Ford and others. It was stated that members of the fifth generation of the Gater Family are now in the School. It was a meeting of gracious influences, and the memory of it will be long cherished by those who were present.

The following are the present trustees, viz.:—J. Broadhurst, G. Bennett, R. Kilgour, J. Mountford, J. Cooper, J. Price, W. Powner, J. Copeland, S. Gater, W. Allmark, W. Lees, S. Bratt, H. Beech, R. Berrisford.

OFFICERS.

Trust Treasurer, W. Allmark; *Secretary*, R. Berrisford; *Pew Steward*, J. Walker.

Church Treasurer, T. Forster; *Secretary*, H. Beech; *Offertory Steward*, G. Maddock; *Organist*, W. Allmark; *Choirmaster*, W. Lees.

Sunday School Superintendents—*Boys*, W. Allmark and G. Maddock; *Girls*, W. M. Dawson and J. Cyples; *Treasurer*, H. Beech; *Secretaries*, T. Wilcox and W. Hammond.

Clothing Fund Treasurer, W. E. Moss; *Secretary*, H. Hawthorne.

Benevolent Fund Treasurer, H. Turner; *Secretary*, F. Walker.

RETURNS;—Members, 49; Probationers, 6; Teachers, 29; Scholars, 341.

CHAPTER XVI.

Smallthorne—Salem.

TO Mr. Thomas Walker, the grandfather of Mrs. Emberton, Mrs. Boulton, and Mrs. W. H. Martin, whose families are amongst the most active of our present workers, belongs the honour of founding the Methodist New Connexion in Smallthorne. In his own house, situate in Leek Road, directly opposite St. Saviour's Church, he commenced a Sunday School, which was the first established in the village. There also, a few devout souls met to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. In 1827, a somewhat larger cottage was rented, two doors higher up the road. In October of that year, Smallthorne made its first appearance as a preaching place on the Circuit plan, but with week night appointments only, which were held on the Thursday of the second week in each month. It was not until three years later that a Sunday service was added, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

For nine years the little Church and Sunday School carried on the work of God in that cottage; and the place was endeared to not a few as their spiritual birthplace. For in that kitchen with its low ceiling, small window, and poor ventilation, crowded with sincere and earnest worshippers, the power of God was often present to heal and save. But the time came when necessity was laid upon them to provide larger premises, and they said—"Let us rise up and build.



MR. THOMAS WALKER,
The Founder of Smallthorne Sunday School.

So they strengthened their hands for this good work." They were poor people, but were rich in faith. They believed in God, whose servants they were, and in the power of the gospel, which had saved their souls and transformed their lives. They gave their money, their time, their labour; and in 1838 the first chapel was built, on the present site, but facing into Lord Street. It was small, but commodious compared with the cottage they had left. The dear good souls had never been accustomed to things on a large scale. and to them it was :—

" like a palace, built for God."

There were subsequent alterations, additions, and enlargements. The present vestries and infant room were added.

Among the chief workers in those early days was Thomas Walker, the founder of the cause, a good and faithful servant, and a brother beloved. He lived to see

the seed he had sown grow into a strong and flourishing tree, then fell asleep on the bosom of God, in the ninety-sixth year of his age. There were also John Cope, Thomas Wright, Henry Ball, Thomas Cope, Henry Mitchell, Thomas Scarlett. Representatives of nearly all these families have maintained their loyalty and allegiance to the church of their fathers, and are with us still, honourable and active members.

In 1874, the foundation stones of the present chapel, with schoolroom underneath, were laid by Mr. John Ridgway and Mr. John Cope. The latter was a fellow worker and true friend of Thomas Walker. They sowed and reaped together. They shared each other's labours, and rejoiced in each other's success. Mr. Cope was superintendent of the school for many years, and in other ways so closely identified with every department of the church, that the



MR. JOHN COPE.

place was commonly spoken of as "John Cope's chapel." Thomas Cope, his son, built the chapel.

The opening services were conducted by Rev. J. W. Williams, one of the saintliest and most successful men our ministry ever possessed. He was the father of Rev. J. G. Williams, who, a few years ago, was stationed at Tunstall,



SALEM CHAPEL AND SCHOOL, SMALLTHORPE.

and served the circuit with great efficiency and acceptability for three years.

The leading men at that time were Benjamin Lewis, Enoch Boote, Henry Hodgkiss, Henry Howle, James Cartlidge, Edwin Lees, Thomas Bailey, Thomas Emberton, and Jacob Boulton. Some of them still remain, and their interest in the work is unabated.

Since 1874, no structural alteration has been made, but four cottages, adjoining the chapel, have been purchased.

In 1899, a large plot of land in South Lord Street, measuring 2550 superficial square yards or thereabouts, was bought for the sum of £520, of which £320 has been already raised. The intention of the trustees is, when the way is clear, to build a new chapel and schools, with modern appointments and equipments. Such premises are greatly needed, for the school is sadly crippled for want of classrooms and a larger



MR. RICHARD NATION.
Circuit Secretary Steward.

assembly hall. We hope the oldest member will live to see this thing accomplished.

All departments are healthy and vigorous, and work well together. A spirit of love and unity prevails in both church and school. The friends are most cordial and hospitable, and it is always a pleasure to visit them.

The last appointment of trustees comprised the following:—Thomas Bailey, Jacob Boulton, James Carr, Ambrose Cartlidge, Samuel Cook, Thomas Emberton, Corbett Goodwin, William Goodwin, James Watkin, James Harris, William Hodgkiss, Charles Holdcroft, William H. Martin, Henry Nixon, Joseph Turner, Thomas Cope.

OFFICERS.

Trust Treasurer, Thomas Emberton; *Secretary*, Richard Nation; *Pew Steward*, William H. Martin.

Church Treasurer, James Pedley; *Secretary*, Jacob Boulton, Jr; *Organist*, Ambrose Cartlidge.

Sunday School Superintendents, Joseph Turner, John Harris, James Pedley; *Treasurer*, Henry Nixon; *Secretaries*, John Nation, William Martin.

Returns—Members, 83; Probationers, 7; Teachers, 55; Scholars, 456.



CHAPTER XVII.

Congleton.

OUR Cause at Congleton has had a somewhat checkered but honourable history. It has been in deep waters and shallow, and once or twice has nearly run aground, but under the guiding hand of the great Captain of our Salvation it has been able to keep afloat through storm and calm.

Like all other churches in the circuit, its birth-place was a cottage, which was situate in New Street. After a time a removal was made to a more commodious house in Elizabeth Street, opposite the land on which the chapel now stands. The exact date of commencement is not known, but in 1823 Congleton was admitted in the Hanley Circuit Plan as a *mission*, and continued so for twelve months, when in 1824, it appeared as a separate church. It was regularly and fully supplied with preachers for thirteen years, when for some reason not stated, in 1837 appointments were given only on four Sundays in the quarter, the remainder being left blank to be supplied by local men. About a year before that change was made a site was secured on which to build a chapel. The land measured 532 $\frac{1}{4}$ superficial square yards and is leasehold, with a tenure of *nine hundred and ninety-nine years*, at an annual rental of £6 13s. 0d. The chapel was built in 1836, at a cost of £436. Building materials and labour were much cheaper in those days than now, but even under those circumstances they must have got good value for their money. It is a well-built structure,



CONGLETON CHAPEL AND SCHOOL.

measuring 67×42 feet, has a gallery on both sides and at the end, with an orchestra behind the pulpit and a vestry beneath, and contains 226 "payable" sittings, and 100 free seats. The amount raised at the time of building was about £146, leaving a debt of £290, £200 of which was obtained on mortgage, and £90 by promissory note on the personal security of the trustees. Interest at the rate of *five per centum per annum* was paid, amounting to £14 10s. 0d. which, with the ground rent made an annual charge against the estate of £21 3s. 0d. That was a burden in those days and pressed heavily on the handful of poor people. Circumstances were against them, and they lost heart and hope, and the debt having increased to £332 17s. 3d. a meeting of trustees was held at Macclesfield on March 25th, 1844, at which a resolution was passed offering the chapel to the

Conference for £300. But by faith in God, hard and steady work, and a little financial assistance, the difficulty was surmounted, and things became more hopeful and prosperous.

The original trustees were William Ridgway, James Jackson, John Stubbs, William Wear, Thomas Hatton, Isaac Moss, John Cherry, Thomas Crockett, William Warrington, James Wright, Thomas Pemberton, Levi Malkin. John Ridgway, though not a trustee, was interested in the place, and frequently visited and preached there.



MR. THOMAS JACKSON,
Sunday School Superintendent for 46 Years.

The Sunday School was built in 1856, the foundation stones being laid by Mr. Thomas Pemberton and Mr. William Warrington in the spring of that year, and the opening taking place at Christmas, with a large Tea Meeting and great rejoicing.

Congleton was included in the Burslem Circuit when it was separated from Hanley in 1851; but after a while, to secure more efficient working, it was annexed to Macclesfield. In 1885 however, it again became part of the Burslem Circuit.

In 1898 a new organ, built by Arthur Worrall, of Congleton, was purchased at a cost of £70. It is a very good instrument for the money, and has proved a great help



MR. HENRY MOORES.

to the service of praise. The Chapel was thoroughly renovated in 1883, and a new heating apparatus and modern gas fittings introduced. Again in 1899 it was repaired, painted and decorated, and furnished with incandescent lights; and in 1902, the school was renovated and wainscotted all round. It is now a very comfortable and compact estate, and in excellent condition. The debt stands at £150, and the Con-

ference has promised a free loan of £100, to be repaid by ten annual instalments, provided £50 be raised locally. This will be done. Having discharged the obligations incurred by the recent improvement of the school, the friends are now turning their attention to that object.

The Trust Estate was never in an easier financial condition than at present, and things never looked better. The evening congregation is good, and the school is flourishing. A gracious revival, resulting in the conversion of a number of young men and young women, gladdened all hearts last year, and a Christian Endeavour Society has been formed which gives promise of great usefulness in the church. There is no reason why we should not become a strong and influential church in that ancient town, able to support a resident minister, who would shepherd the flock, and by his presence and labours, with a willing and helpful people, do a grand work for God and man.

The following are the trustees now resident in or near Congleton:—J. Hall, J. Stubbs, J. B. Jackson, T. Jackson, W. Cliffe, S. Pointon, J. Smith, G. Hassall, J. Gaunt, F. Skelton, G. Cliffe, G. H. Hassall; and associated with the above in the administration of the estate, but not trustees, are D. Jackson, T. Thompson, G. W. Kennerley.

OFFICERS.

Trust Treasurer, J. Gaunt; *Secretary*, D. Jackson; *Pew Steward*, T. Thompson, Jr.

Church Treasurer, F. Skelton; *Secretary*, G. H. Hassall.

Sunday School Superintendents, G. H. Hassall and J. Gaunt;
Treasurer, D. Jackson; *Secretary*, G. W. Kennerley.

Returns—Members, 45; Probationers, 12; Teachers, 19;
Scholars, 220.

The Circuit—Preachers and Officers.

AUGUST 2nd, TO OCTOBER 25th, 1903

"We are Labourers together with God."

PREACHERS NAMES AND ADDRESSES.

- 1 J. YOUNG, 218, Waterloo Road, Burslem.
- 2 F. RHODES, 81, Goodfellow Street, Tunstall.
- 3 J. A. HUGHES, 11, Derby Street, Burslem.
- 4 J. Bowdon, Oak House, Endon.
(Entered into rest, Aug. 16th.)
- 5 D. Reid, Cemetery House, Tunstall.
- 6 J. P. Guy, Waterloo Road, Burslem.
- 7 E. Tushingham, Marsh Avenue, Wolstanton.
- 8 W. E. Robinson, Rushton Road, Burslem.
- 9 H. T. Barnett, High Lane, Burslem.
- 10 C. Goodwin, 16, Dartmouth Street, Burslem.
- 11 J. Wright, 1, Chell Heath Road, Smallthorne.
- 12 R. Beresford, 20, Trubshaw Street, Burslem.
- 13 E. J. Barnett, Macclesfield Street, Burslem.
- 14 W. Scott, 12, Church Street, Tunstall.
- 15 W. Duncalf, 84, Leek Road, Smallthorne.
- 16 J. Walker, 2, Albion Street, Burslem.
- 17 G. Turner, 49, Queen Street, Burslem.
- 18 A. J. Pepper, Stanley Street, Smallthorne.
- 19 F. W. Beeston, 2, Moorland Road, Burslem.

ON TRIAL—3rd Quarter.

- 20 H. Flackett, 36, Milton Road, Sneyd Green.

AUXILIARY.

- 21 W. M. Dawson, 86, Hall Street, Burslem.

CIRCUIT OFFICERS.

Treasurer Steward, Mr. H. J. Baines, Waterloo Road.
Secretary Steward, Mr. R. Nation, Smallthorne.
Chapel Secretary & Auditor, Mr. R. Nation.
Local Preachers' Secretary, Mr. W. Scott, Tunstall.
Mission Treasurer, Rev. J. Young.
" Secretary, Rev. F. Rhodes, Tunstall.
Young People's Secretary, Mr. E. J. Barnett, Macclesfield Street, Burslem.
Auditor of Quarterly Meeting Accounts, Mr. A. H. Ryles.

Circuit Returns: CHURCHES, 6.—Members, 498; Probationers, 81.
 SUNDAY SCHOOLS, 6. Teachers, 255; Scholars, 22



MR. WILFRED SCOTT,
Local Preachers' Secretary.



MR. A. H. RYLES,
Circuit Auditor.

Conclusion.

THE Circuit, on the whole, is in a healthy condition, and may be pronounced a "good circuit." The friends are cordial, and pleasant to work with, but are not largely imbued with the spirit of aggression, and not quite so responsive to spiritual claims as we could desire. A strenuous effort should be made to free the three or four trust estates, which are somewhat hampered with debt, and then a vigorous forward movement should be inaugurated, and new interests commenced here and there. The circuit has not yet developed its full powers. It has been too self-centred, and still is. It has resources which are capable of sustaining an all-alive policy. There are spiritual forces which if alert, active and pushful could do wonders. Every church is situate in the midst of a "field white already to harvest." Better opportunities no churches ever had. The calls are loud and urgent, and a grave responsibility rests upon those to whom the calls come.

The financial resources are equal to a vigorous and aggressive policy. The Sunday School Anniversaries alone, this year, have yielded nearly £500, thus:—Bethel, £100 0s. 1d.; Cobridge, £86 10s. 4d.; Tunstall, £122 15s. 9½d.; Dalehall, £58 19s. 8d.; Smallthorne, £97; Congleton, £31 1s. 1½d.; total, £496 7s. 0d. A circuit that can do that should have little or no debt, and never be at a dead stand. In twenty years from this time we hope that at least four new churches will have been added. With God all things are possible, and there is nothing that simple faith, earnest love, and persistent zeal, cannot accomplish. The more a

church does, the more it is capable of doing. The wider its sphere of action the greater is its success; new resources are tapped, fresh talents secured, and more spiritual forces gathered. The sower and reaper rejoice together, God is glorified, and the world made better.

“Awake, awake ! Put on thy strength.”

“He that winneth souls is wise.”

“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

